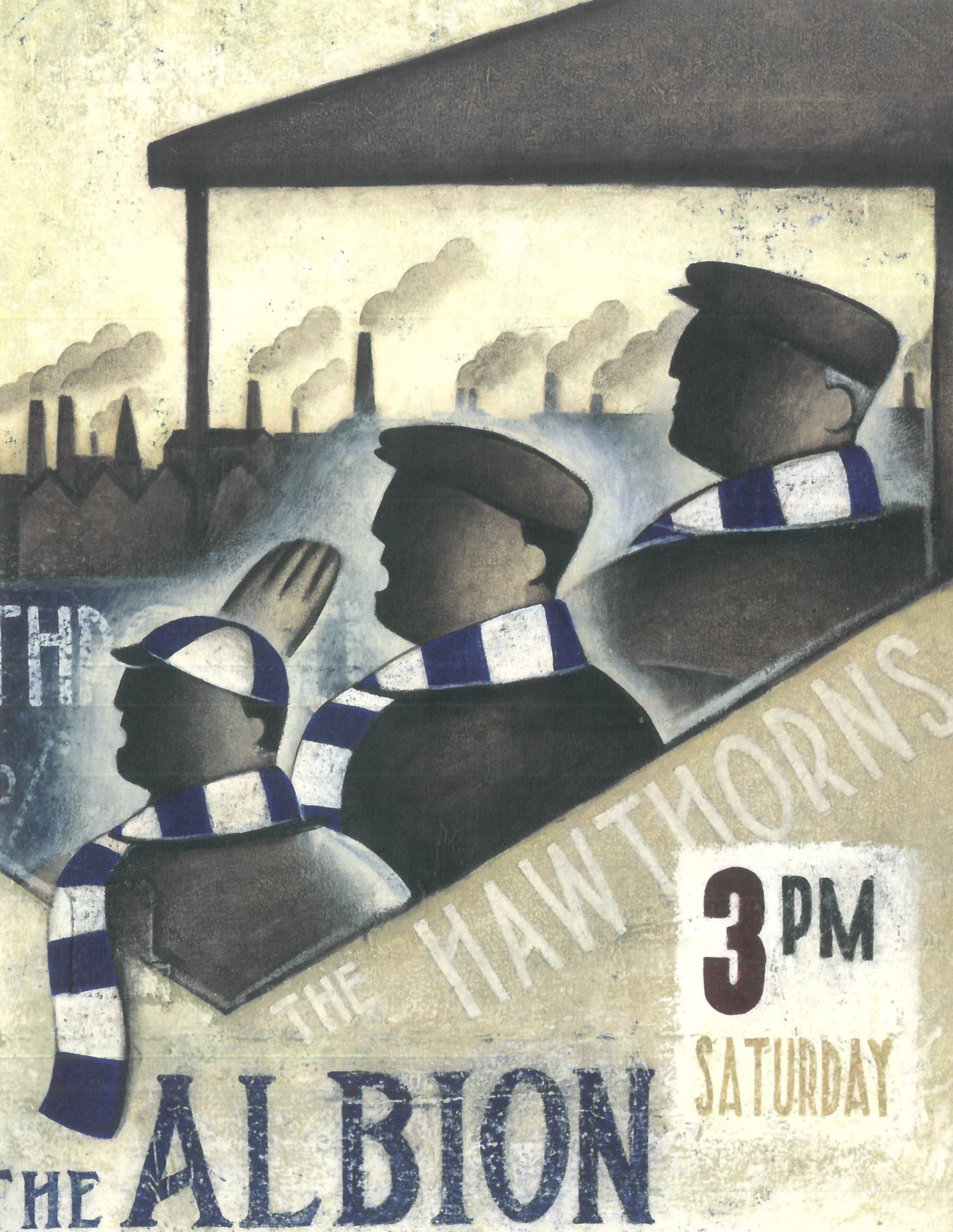




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FA CUP WINNERS 1887/88, 1891/92, 1930/31,
1953/54, 1967/68
FA CUP FINALISTS 1885/86, 1886/87, 1894/95,
1911/12, 1934/35
FOOTBALL LEAGUE CUP WINNERS 1965/66
FOOTBALL LEAGUE CUP FINALISTS
1966/67, 1969/70

POST PREMIER LEAGUE

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ORDER OF SERVICE

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11

GAMES

26th December v Manchester City

1st January v Everton

14th January v Norwich City

4th February v Swansea City

25th February v Sunderland

3rd March v Chelsea

24th March v Newcastle United

7th April v Blackburn Rovers

14th April v Queens Park Rangers

28th April v Aston Villa

13th May v Arsenal

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ood afternoon everyone and welcome back to The Hawthorns. I'd like to extend a similar welcome to Owen Coyle and the players, directors, staff and supporters from Bolton Wanderers who are with us this afternoon.

Before I begin today, I would like to congratulate Michael Appleton on being appointed Portsmouth's new manager. Michael has been a great help to me since I joined the club in February of this year and he fully deserves this opportunity to manage a team of his own. As a club, we are very sorry to see him go, but we wish him every success at Fratton Park.

Now that the international breaks are behind us, we enter a particularly pivotal period of the season as the Barclays Premier League takes centre stage without any other distractions for the next couple of months. Given the difficulty of our fixture list thus far, we have made a solid beginning to things in what is again shaping up to be a very closely contested season with lots of clubs separated by very few points.

Our last two games have brought us disappointing results against two of the best sides in the country on days where decisions did not perhaps go our way and when fortune deserted us a little. However, looking at games in isolation can very often give a false impression and I think it's preferable to look for a longer term pattern.

We took six points from the four games played between the international breaks and I think most observers would suggest that was a very respectable tally given the quality of the opposition and the ferocious and

perhaps unpredictable nature of playing local derby games. When that is added to the five points taken from the previous four games, I think it represents a healthy trend following the slow start we made in the opening three fixtures. Eleven points from 11 games represents a good foundation on which we can build as we go into this important phase of the season.

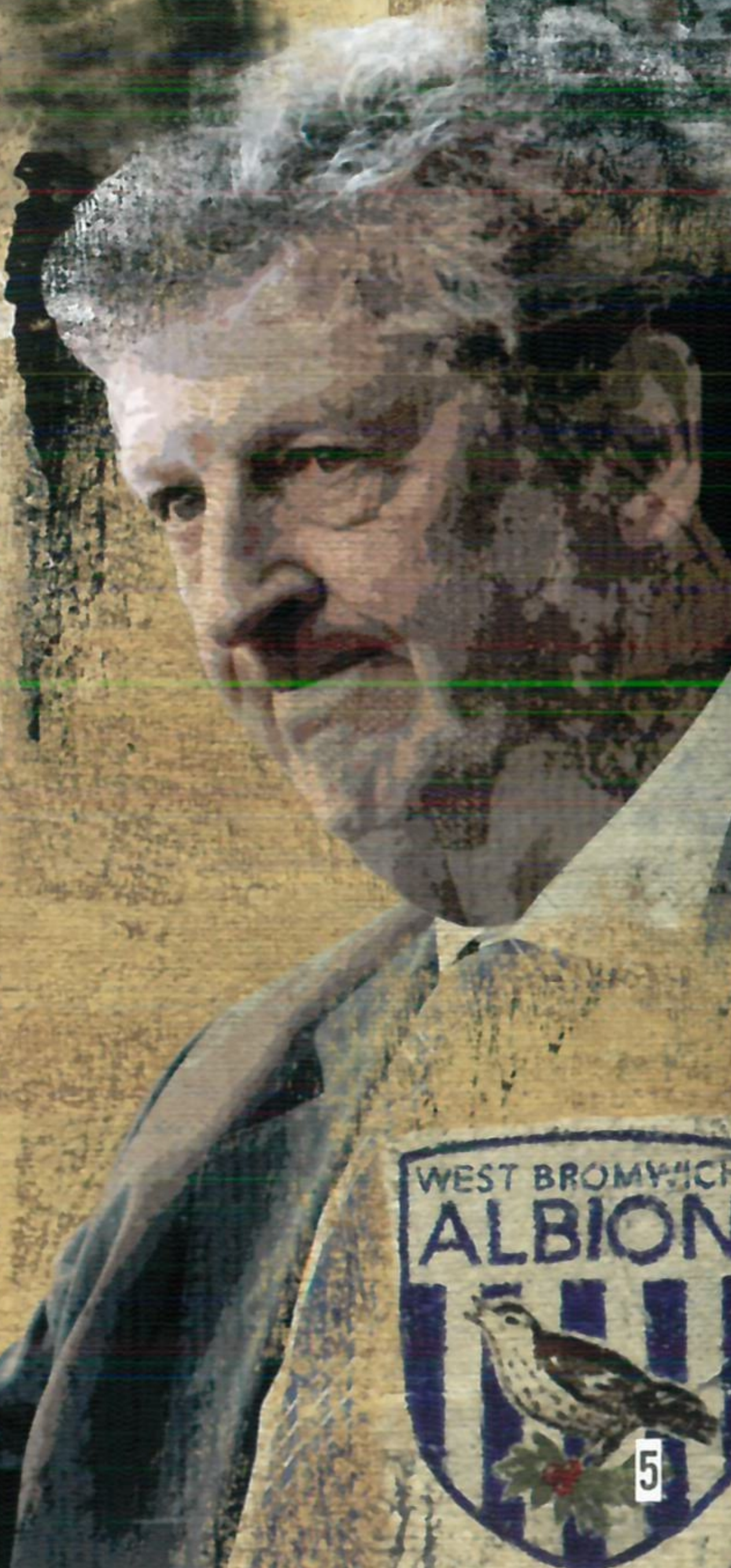
Home games are always especially important in deciding how a season goes and that will be no different this year. Having two games at The Hawthorns on successive Saturdays gives us an opportunity to collect some points but doing so will be anything but easy, not least today.

Bolton have had a difficult time at the start of the season, but any team that can score five times without reply against Stoke City, as they did in their last game, is clearly one to be reckoned with. They will be hoping that that result was the start of a better spell for them and they will doubtless be full of confidence as they approach the game today.

Our task is to be ready for that but, more importantly, to impose ourselves on the game and to reproduce the kind of form that saw us win back to back derby games just a few weeks ago. If we can reach the standards we set against Wolves and Aston Villa, then with the vocal support that you can generate for the team, we will give ourselves every chance of achieving a positive result.

Enjoy the game.

HEAD COACH



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CAPTAIN



t's incredible how quickly things can switch around, from the euphoria of winning back to back

local derbies to getting beaten by Liverpool and Arsenal. We expected two completely different games to Wolves and Villa, and unfortunately, we got them.

There's no disgrace in losing to sides of their quality, but I think we were disappointed with how we played in them, especially the Liverpool game at The Hawthorns. Whoever you are up against in a home game, you want to give them a run for their money and we were poor, we didn't really create anything to put them under pressure and that was a real shame coming off the back of those two wins.

Saying that, if the penalty hadn't been given early on, maybe it would have been a different game because once a team like that gets in front early on, they can start to dictate things. To us, it was a ridiculous decision, I don't think even the Liverpool players were claiming it, so when he pointed to the spot, nobody could believe it. It was a real kick in the teeth because from there, you have to start to push things a little bit more and teams as good as Liverpool start to make use of the space that opens up.

That was the way they scored the second but it was really poor play from us to get into that position, very sloppy. We didn't leave enough players behind the ball and there's no excuse for that because we're working on those kinds of things every day in training. Once they got possession, it was straightforward for them to get in behind us and though they worked it well, it was a bit of a gift.

I don't know if the fact that we'd played Wolves and Villa in the weeks before had any effect on us or not. They were big games, big atmospheres, and they do take a lot out of you physically and mentally. Maybe that was why we were a bit flat against Liverpool, I don't know. Really, we should have been full of confidence after getting six points out of six, so it was disappointing that to be honest, we didn't turn up, certainly in the first half.



the
West
Brom



Going away to the Emirates is always a tough one and although we came out on top last season, I think we met them at the wrong time this year because they're just coming back into the typical Arsenal form after a bad start to the season for them.

Robin Van Persie is in incredible form especially. We spoke about him before the game and what we could try to do to keep him quiet, but he's a world class performer at the top of his form and when you get that, it can make life very difficult. Everything they do goes through him and he's having one of those spells where everything is going right as well, and though you don't like it at the time, when the game is over and you look back at it, you have to appreciate just what a good player he is.

I thought we were better against Arsenal than Liverpool, on the whole we defended pretty well and losing 3-0 was perhaps a bit harsh, but we didn't do enough to get anything out of the game and that was frustrating. We certainly put a good shift in because against Arsenal who keep possession so

well, you have to a lot of chasing and work off the ball, so we were pretty exhausted by the finish, but as the gaffer said afterwards, those aren't the games that are going to make or break our season, it's more the games that are coming up over the next few weeks.

Our biggest positive on the day was Zoltan coming back and playing most of the game. It was a pretty tough one to be coming back into, I don't think he'll be thanking the gaffer for that! But it was great to have him out there, he worked hard in a game where he and Coxy got very little for what they put in. Zolly's been away with Hungary and got a bit more football under his belt now and hopefully he'll be nice and sharp going into today's game.

I love playing for my country and representing Northern Ireland is a massive honour, but I must admit that not having any games during an international break was a nice change. The season really starts to get moving from here with games every week, the Christmas period to come and no real let up in sight, so to just have a weekend away from it to just recharge and relax, I think that can do

wonders for you – let's hope so anyway! Going back into training on Tuesday morning after a long weekend, it certainly felt fresher, you do need to clear your head from time to time, and it gives the lads that haven't played for their country a bit of time to get rid of any niggly little injuries or knocks and put their feet up for a few days. Football is just everywhere all the time and to have a few days to forget about it is nice sometimes.

While we've had the break, we've seen Michael Appleton leave the club and join Portsmouth and that's going to be a loss for us. The fact that he's gone to such a big club as his first job as a manager speaks very highly of the job he has done here as a coach over the years and I'm sure that he'll do very well. He's very focused and managing a club has been all he's wanted to do ever since he had to hang his boots up. He'll be missed around the place, although at least we'll be able to get in the gym now! All we can do now is wish him the very best of luck, but I'm sure he will be a big success down there because that's the type of guy that he is.

Our focus is today though, and hopefully we can really start flying again, particularly today because this is a big game for us. We need to start winning home games on a regular basis, particularly against teams that are around us in the table. It won't be easy, especially with Paul Robinson coming back. It's always nice to see him – I had dinner with him and his wife not too long ago, so we keep in touch. He's a great lad, I always got on very well with him and when I first joined, he was one of the people who made me feel very welcome here. We played down the left a lot together and we always had a good relationship, but I don't want to give him any joy today. I ended up playing against him at the Reebok when we lost, so it would be nice to turn that round and keep him quiet!

Like I said, winning at home is your key to a good season and we haven't done enough of it. However tough this one is, we know we're capable of getting the three points and if we do that, the table will look much nicer going into the game with Tottenham next weekend.



ALBION FIXTURES

DATE / OPPOSITION / RESULT / ATTENDANCE / PLACING / REFEREE							STARTING ELEVEN				
SUN	AUG	14	MANCHESTER UNITED (KO 4PM)	1-2	25,360	–	M.Jones	Foster	Reid	Tamas	Olsson
SAT	AUG	20	CHELSEA (KO 5.30PM)	1-2	41,091	–	L.Mason	Foster	Reid	Tamas	Olsson
TUE	AUG	23	BOURNEMOUTH (LEAGUE CUP 2)	4-1	6,911	–	R.East	Fulop	Jones	Dawson	McAuley
SUN	AUG	28	STOKE CITY	0-1	22,909	18	M.Dean	Foster	Reid	Tamas	Olsson
SUN	SEP	11	NORWICH (KO 1.30PM)	1-0	26,158	12	M.Halsey	Foster	Reid	Tamas	Olsson
SAT	SEP	17	SWANSEA CITY	0-3	20,341	18	M.Atkinson	Foster	Reid	Dawson	Olsson
WED	SEP	21	EVERTON (LEAGUE CUP 3 KO 8PM)	1-2 aet	17,647	–	J.Moss	Fulop	Jones	McAuley	Olsson
SAT	SEP	24	FULHAM	0-0	23,835	19	S.Attwell	Foster	Reid	McAuley	Olsson
SAT	OCT	1	SUNDERLAND	2-2	34,815	15	L.Mason	Foster	Reid	McAuley	Olsson
SUN	OCT	16	WOLVES (KO 12PM)	2-0	24,872	11	C.Foy	Foster	Reid	McAuley	Olsson
SAT	OCT	22	ASTON VILLA	2-1	34,152	10	P.Dowd	Foster	Reid	McAuley	Olsson ¹
SAT	OCT	29	LIVERPOOL (KO 5.30PM)	0-2	25,522	13	L.Mason	Foster	Reid	McAuley	Olsson
SAT	NOV	5	ARSENAL	0-3	60,091	13	M.Oliver	Foster	Reid	McAuley	Olsson
SAT	NOV	19	BOLTON WANDERERS								
SAT	NOV	26	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR								
SAT	DEC	3	QUEENS PARK RANGERS								
SAT	DEC	10	WIGAN ATHLETIC								
SAT	DEC	17	BLACKBURN ROVERS								
WED	DEC	21	NEWCASTLE UNITED (KO 7.45PM)								
MON	DEC	26	MANCHESTER CITY (KO 3PM)								
SUN	JAN	1	EVERTON (KO 12.30PM)								
TUE	JAN	3	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (KO 7.45PM)								
SAT	JAN	14	NORWICH CITY								
SAT	JAN	21	STOKE CITY								
WED	FEB	1	FULHAM								
SAT	FEB	4	SWANSEA CITY								
SUN	FEB	12	WOLVES (KO 1PM)								
SAT	FEB	25	SUNDERLAND								
SAT	MAR	3	CHELSEA								
SAT	MAR	10	MANCHESTER UNITED								
SAT	MAR	17	WIGAN ATHLETIC								
SAT	MAR	24	NEWCASTLE UNITED								
SAT	MAR	31	EVERTON								
SAT	APR	7	BLACKBURN ROVERS								
MON	APR	9	MANCHESTER CITY (KO 3PM)								
SAT	APR	14	QUEENS PARK RANGERS								
SAT	APR	21	LIVERPOOL								
SUN	APR	28	ASTON VILLA								
SAT	MAY	5	BOLTON WANDERERS								
SUN	MAY	13	ARSENAL								

MMXI/II

BARCLAYS
PREMIER LEAGUE

TheFA
CUP

CARLING CUP

SCORER (in bold)
Booked
Sent Off

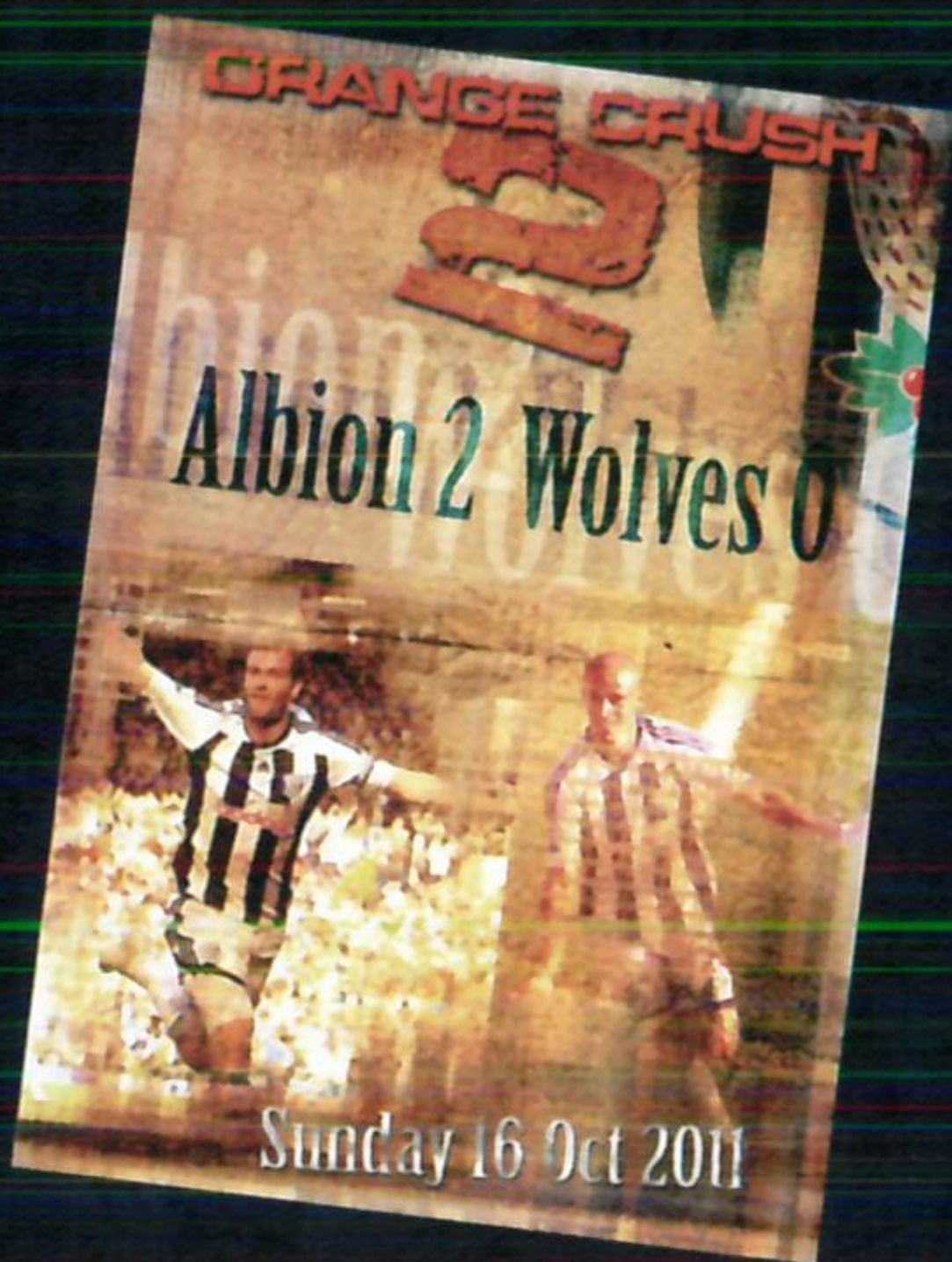
Sub 1
Sub 2
Sub 3

SUBSTITUTES

Brunt	Mulumbu	Scharner	Morrison	Tchoyi	Long ¹	Jara Reyes	Cox	Dorrans	Thorne	Fortune	Dawson	Fulop
Brunt	Mulumbu	Scharner	Morrison	Tchoyi	Long ¹	Odemwingie	Dorrans	Jara Reyes	Cech	Cox	McAuley	Fulop
Jara Reyes	Thorne	Dorrans	Thomas ¹	Cox ¹	Fortune ²	Mattock	Bednar	Mantom	Roofe	Downing	Hurst	Daniels
Brunt	Mulumbu	Scharner	Morrison	Tchoyi	Long	Thomas	Fortune	Dorrans	Jones	Cox	Dawson	Fulop
Dorrans	Mulumbu	Scharner	Thomas	Odemwingie ¹	Long	Morrison	Brunt	Tchoyi	Jones	Cox	Dawson	Fulop
Morrison	Mulumbu	Scharner	Thomas	Odemwingie	Long	Dorrans	Brunt	Cox	Jones	Fortune	McAuley	Fulop
Brunt ¹	Thorne	Dorrans	Cox	Odemwingie	Tchoyi	Morrison	Scharner	Dawson	Mulumbu	Jara Reyes	Berahino	Daniels
Brunt	Mulumbu	Dorrans	Thomas	Odemwingie	Long	Morrison	Tchoyi	Scharner	Jones	Cox	Dawson	Fulop
Brunt	Mulumbu	Dorrans	Morrison ¹	Odemwingie	Long ¹	Scharner	Thomas	Tchoyi	Jones	Cox	Tamas	Fulop
Brunt ¹	Mulumbu	Scharner	Thomas	Tchoyi	Long	Odemwingie ¹	Morrison	Shorey	Dorrans	Cox	Dawson	Fulop
Brunt	Mulumbu	Scharner	Thomas	Odemwingie	Long	Tchoyi	Morrison	Gera	Shorey	Cox	Dawson	Fulop
Brunt	Mulumbu	Scharner	Thomas	Odemwingie	Tchoyi	Morrison	Dorrans	Cox	Shorey	Gera	Dawson	Fulop
Brunt	Morrison	Dorrans	Thomas	Gera	Cox	Tchoyi	Mulumbu	Thorne	Shorey	Fortune	Dawson	Fulop

ORANGE CRUSH 2

ALBION 2
WOLVES 0



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ALBION STATS

BARCLAYS
PREMIER LEAGUE



THIS WEEKEND'S FIXTURES:

Saturday, 29 October 2011

Norwich v Arsenal, 12:45

Everton v Wolverhampton, 15:00

Manchester City v Newcastle, 15:00

Stoke v QPR, 15:00

Sunderland v Fulham, 15:00

Wigan v Blackburn, 15:00

Swansea v Manchester United, 17:30

Sunday, 20 November 2011

Chelsea v Liverpool, 16:00

Monday, 21 November 2011

Tottenham v Aston Villa, 20:00

RECORD V BOLTON WANDERERS

LAST MEETINGS:

26 December 2010: Bolton 2 Albion 0

2 October 2010: Albion 1 Bolton 1

RECORD WIN:

8 December 1900: Albion 7 Bolton 2

RECORD DEFEAT:

7 December 1899: Bolton 7 Albion 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A
HOME	66	27	24	15	121	94
AWAY	66	15	19	32	66	117
CUP	10	5	3	2	18	10
TOTAL	142	47	46	49	205	221

BARCLAYS PREMIER LEAGUE MMXI/XII

	TEAM	PLD	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	MANCHESTER CITY	11	10	1	0	39	10	29	31
2	MANCHESTER UNITED	11	8	2	1	28	12	16	26
3	NEWCASTLE UNITED	11	7	4	0	17	8	9	25
4	CHELSEA	11	7	1	3	24	15	9	22
5	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR	10	7	1	2	21	15	6	22
6	LIVERPOOL	11	5	4	2	14	10	4	19
7	ARSENAL	11	6	1	4	23	21	2	19
8	ASTON VILLA	11	3	6	2	16	15	1	15
9	NORWICH CITY	11	3	4	4	16	18	-2	13
10	SWANSEA CITY	11	3	4	4	12	15	-3	13
11	QUEENS PARK RANGERS	11	3	3	5	10	20	-10	12
12	STOKE CITY	11	3	3	5	8	19	-11	12
13	WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS	11	3	2	6	12	18	-6	11
14	WEST BROMWICH ALBION	11	3	2	6	9	16	-7	11
15	SUNDERLAND	11	2	4	5	14	13	1	10
16	FULHAM	11	2	4	5	14	15	-1	10
17	EVERTON	10	3	1	6	11	15	-4	10
18	BOLTON WANDERERS	11	3	0	8	18	27	-9	9
19	BLACKBURN ROVERS	11	1	3	7	13	24	-11	6
20	WIGAN ATHLETIC	11	1	2	8	7	20	-13	5

FIRST TEAM APPEARANCES MMXI-XII

	PREMIER LEAGUE			FA CUP			LEAGUE CUP		
	APP	GL	B/SO	APP	GL	B/SO	APP	GL	B/SO
BEN FOSTER	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JOE MATTOCK	0	0	0	0	0	0	1+1	0	0
JONAS OLSSON	11	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
MAREK CECH	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
SOMEN TCHOYI	5+4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
JAMES MORRISON	6+5	1	0	0	0	0	0+1	0	0
SHANE LONG	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHRIS BRUNT	9+2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
STEVEN REID	11	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
MARTON FULOP	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
JEROME THOMAS	7+2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
CHRIS WOOD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRAHAM DORRANS	4+4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
GONZALO JARA REYES	0+1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
LUKE DANIELS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NICKY SHOREY	7+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YOUSOUF MULUMBU	10+1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
ZOLTAN GERA	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GARETH MCAULEY	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
PETER ODEMWINGIE	6+2	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
CRAIG DAWSON	1	0	0	0	0	0	1+1	0	0
JAMES HURST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SAM MANTOM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0+1	0	0
BILLY JONES	4	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
GEORGE THORNE	0+1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
GABRIEL TAMAS	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SIMON COX	1+3	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0
MARC-ANTOINE FORTUNE	0+1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
PAUL SCHARNER	8+1	1	3	0	0	0	0+1	0	0
ROMAN BEDNAR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0+1	0	0

CAREER APPEARANCES

	LEAGUE		FA CUP		LEAGUE CUP		OTHERS		TOTAL	
	APP	GL	APP	GL	APP	GL	APP	GL	APP	GL
BEN FOSTER	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0
JOE MATTOCK	27+3	0	2+1	1	2+2	0	0	0	31+6	1
JONAS OLSSON	106	8	4+1	2	3	0	0	0	113+1	10
SOMEN TCHOYI	12+20	6	0	0	4	1	0	0	16+20	7
JAMES MORRISON	91+27	12	6+2	2	2+1	0	0	0	99+30	14
SHANE LONG	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	3
CHRIS BRUNT	132+21	30	8+5	1	3	1	0	0	143+26	32
STEVEN REID	34+10	2	0	0	4	1	0	0	38+10	3
MARTON FULOP	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
JEROME THOMAS	61+8	10	1+1	1	2	1	0	0	64+9	12
CHRIS WOOD	6+15	1	0+2	1	0+4	1	0	0	6+21	3
GRAHAM DORRANS	67+15	14	6+2	3	8	2	0	0	81+17	19
GONZALO JARA REYES	44+8	2	4	0	2+2	0	0	0	50+10	2
LUKE DANIELS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NICKY SHOREY	32+4	0	0	0	2+1	0	0	0	34+5	0
YOUSOUF MULUMBU	81+10	10	3+1	0	0+2	0	0	0	84+13	10
ZOLTAN GERA	105+32	21	8+4	3	2+2	1	2+1	0	117+39	25
GARETH MCAULEY	6	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	8	0
PETER ODEMWINGIE	35+5	17	0	0	1	0	0	0	36+5	17
CRAIG DAWSON	1	0	0	0	1+1	0	0	0	2+1	0
JAMES HURST	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0
SAM MANTOM	0	0	0	0	1+2	0	0	0	1+2	0
BILLY JONES	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	0
GEORGE THORNE	0+3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2+3	0
GABRIEL TAMAS	49+4	2	2+1	0	0	0	0	0	51+5	2
SIMON COX	26+25	10	3	0	9	5	0	0	38+25	15
MARC-ANTOINE FORTUNE	31+11	7	1	0	2+1	2	0	0	34+12	9
PAUL SCHARNER	41+1	5	1	0	0+1	0	0	0	42+2	5
ROMAN BEDNAR	52+34	30	12+1	4	5+1	0	0	0	69+36	34

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SPREADING THE

BARCLAYS PREMIERSHIP
THE HAWTHORNS
SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER 2011
ATT: 25,522
REF: L.MASON



ALBION

0



LIVERPOOL

ADAM (PEN) (9), CARROLL, (45)

2



laying Liverpool has rarely been fertile ground for the Throstles, certainly not in the Premier League era. Two Chris Brunt penalties that gave us a 2-1 win at The Hawthorns last term offer up the only goals and the only points we've ever accumulated from the Reds and sadly, for great stretches of this game, we rarely looked as if we'd upgrading those statistics.

While some will discuss the display of the referee, something to which we'll return, perhaps the fixture list itself was our biggest

GOSPEL

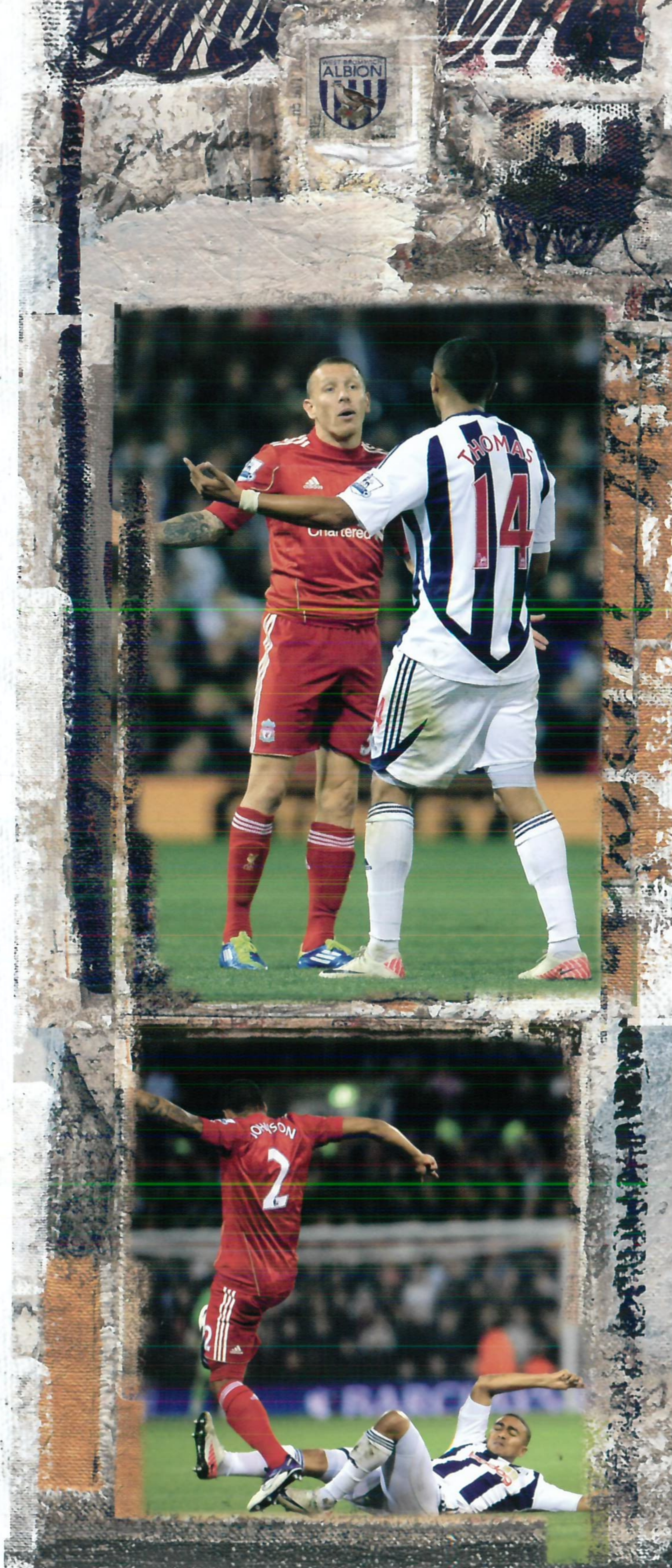


challenge going into this game. Having to play two local derbies on successive weekends is a frankly ridiculous requirement given all that goes into those games, on and off the field. As well we know, Albion were simply magnificent against Wolves and then again at Villa Park, collecting maximum points from games that are always a huge test. Over those two 90 minutes, the Throstles left everything on the pitch, giving all they had to create some extraordinary memories and propel us up the table. But physically, mentally, emotionally, the toll that those two fixtures took on the players must have been immense – it was hard enough just being a spectator.

Perhaps there were other reasons – and we cannot ignore the quality of Liverpool's performance as a contributory factor either – but the demands of those preceding games looked to have taken a toll on an Albion side that had none of that zip or zeal that characterised our recent form. Instead, it was something of a flat start to the game and Liverpool needed no invitation to exact full advantage from the situation.

Even so, after six minutes of pass, pass, pass from Liverpool, it was Albion who almost carved out a chance, quick thinking from the skipper seeing him play a clever free-kick to Peter Odemwingie, the Nigerian swamped in an instant by a sea of red shirts. A couple of minutes later, it was Liverpool causing danger and, ultimately getting their noses in front, albeit in controversial circumstances.

Breaking forward, Suarez was a magnet for the ball, involved three times in the move before he picked up a loose ball after Billy Jones had intercepted his attempted pass to Johnson. With the ball running away from them, Jerome Thomas looked to screen it away to safety, but his proximity to the Uruguayan striker allowed him to test out his centre of gravity. Oddly enough, it was found wanting inside the penalty area and like the man who fell to earth, Suarez was grounded. Though the referee had little interest in his sprawling figure, his assistant was rather



more troubled, leading to the award of a penalty kick. After a considerable delay, Adam stepped up, sent Ben Foster the wrong way and left the ball nestling in the corner of the goal as about half a dozen red shirts encroached as the kick was taken.

One of the great sub plots of the game was the battle between Jonas Olsson and Andy Carroll. Skirmishes had already broken out before, in the 11th minute, Carroll's elbow appeared to make contact with Olsson's throat. Was it deliberate? Who knows, but on the TV evidence, it certainly looked rather worse than the events that got Gabriel Tamas a retrospective three match ban after Norwich City. Still, no England centre-forward ever gets punished for that kind of thing in a league game...

Albion looked to force the issue on the quarter hour when a powerful tackle from Brunt put the ball into the path of Thomas who screwed a 20 yarder wide of goal, but in truth, it was Liverpool that were largely dictating the play at this point. It was no surprise when Suarez – at once a hero for the remarkable quality of his play and a villain for the ease with which he'll use any excuse for a lie down – broke away down the right hand side in the 22nd minute before delivering a sumptuous cross field pass onto the head of Carroll who diverted the ball back across goal and on to the arm of Steven Reid, the referee choosing not to award a penalty this time given that the ball travelled no more than a yard from Carroll's head to Reid's arm, giving him no time

to deliberately handle it, which is what the law requires.

Suarez had a couple of chances beyond the half hour mark, curling a free-kick over the bar then skying a shot from close range after Skretl had drilled the ball into his path following a deep Liverpool corner. But with the half running down, and Olsson on a card for a tackle far less robust than Hutton's on Long at Villa Park a week earlier, Albion started to turn the tide and have a decent spell of our own.

With five minutes to the break, Brunt, Odemwingie and Somen Tchoyi combined neatly, the ball reaching Thomas and then Paul Scharner, his fierce drive blocked by Skrtel. Moments later, Tchoyi fond Thomas who stubbed an instant shot at goal, Reina scrambling away to save.



WEST BROMWICH ALBION

FOSTER

REID

JONES

MULUMBU

OLSSON

MCAULEY

BRUNT

SCHARNER

ODEMWINGIE

TCHOYI

THOMAS

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

X

XI



LIVERPOOL

REINA

JOHNSON

ENRIQUE

LEIVA

SKRTEL

AGGER

HENDERSON

ADAM

CARROLL

SUAREZ

DOWNING



SUBS

Morrison > Scharner 58
Dorrans > Mulumbu 62
Cox > Tchoyi 71
Subs not used:
Fulop, Gera,
Shorey, Dawson

Bellamy > Suarez 81
Subs not used:
Doni, Kuyt, Coates
Spearing, Flanagan,
Rodriguez



Goal



Yellow card



Red card



As it turned out, such encouragement was the last thing we needed. Perhaps over excited by this sniff of goal, Albion committed men forward when, with the interval approaching, caution might have been better, getting in at one down and well in the game. Instead, players bombed forward, Olsson screaming at them to get back as he found himself isolated, the Swede then illustrating the problem with a ball forward that was intercepted, Liverpool breaking swiftly, Lucas springing Suarez down the right. His pinpoint pass to the advancing Carroll gave the England man a sight of goal and with Foster advancing swiftly, he picked his spot and guided the ball just inside the post.

To their credit, it was a much more feisty Albion that we saw after the break, Tchoyi almost getting us back into things as early as the 47th minute, twisting and turning on the edge of the box to fashion a yard of space before seeing his shot spin just wide. But Suarez was not finished and within the space of ten minutes, he'd forced Foster to smother well, smacked a shot over the bar from 15 yards and then picked up the ball from a brilliant Olsson block, chipping the ball too high to trouble the goal.

Liverpool were, if not in cruise control, then playing within themselves by this stage, but the Baggies got little glimpses of opportunity such as the 30 yarder whacked

at Reina by Steven Reid, but the last hope of squeezing something from the game passed us by in the 83rd minute when another fine corner from Brunt found Olsson's head on the edge of the six yard box, the ball flashing wide. But the game was summed up in the final minute. Albion attacking, Gareth McAuley's flick header eluding Odemwingie's outstretched boot, Reina punching it clear. Liverpool were instantly away with Bellamy, the move culminating in Downing's shot hitting the post.

That bit sharper, that bit quicker, that bit better. But only a bit. And given the results over the Premier League years, that must at least represent progress.

JUDGEMENT

ROY
HODGSON



We weren't in particularly good form today, we can do a lot better. But one of the major things that went wrong was having a very harsh penalty awarded against us so early in the game. I think the 25,000 or so supporters inside the stadium, including the Liverpool fans, will probably agree it was a very harsh penalty. Our chances of winning the game were seriously disturbed by that decision.

"I thought the referee saw it and, like the rest of us, didn't see anything – but the linesman did and the referee decided to take the linesman's advice. The situation was that our defender was entitled to screen the ball to try and clear it – and he should have been allowed to do so. But a penalty was awarded and, of course, that meant that a difficult task became that much more difficult. We didn't play as well today as we have been doing but it would have been nice to play with the scores 0-0 for a longer period of time.

"It does worry me a little bit that penalties are being given these days for those type of offences. Handball is another one. Anytime someone blocks a shot in the penalty area, the crowd shout and you expect a penalty to be given. I think penalties should be a lot harder to achieve than that. But it happened and everyone can make their own mind up. I don't want to be here bleating about it.

"Sometimes decisions go your way, sometimes they don't, but the one thing anyone who has watched their football for any length of time does know is that goals and decisions like that do affect results. I do believe there was a negative effect for us to that goal being given, but I'm not blaming the referee totally for our defeat because I don't think we did enough to win the game. I thought we were second best.

"The worst thing was the second goal, which was totally of our own making.

We were having a slightly better spell and taking the game to them, but we got caught with a lot of players forward. The ball got intercepted and we got caught on the counter attack. We have no-one to blame but ourselves for that. That eventually meant what could have been quite an exciting second half at 1-0, with people getting excited about a possible equaliser every time the ball goes near the box, does not happen.

"At 2-0, the situation is much easier to control for the leading team than it is to get back into the game against one of the top teams in the country."



PLACE: Capitol Hill, Washington

PEOPLE: Chris Stibbs, Group Finance Director, The Economist Group
Steve Francis, Relationship Director, Barclays Corporate

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SPREADING THE

EMIRATES STADIUM
SATURDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2011
ATT: 60,091
REF: M.OLIVER



ARSENAL

3

VAN PERSIE (22), VERMAELEN (39), ARTETA (74)



ALBION

0



iming. The secret of so much in life. Sometimes you've got it, sometimes it eludes you. A year ago as we approached the Emirates Stadium, our timing was pretty good, visiting Arsenal just a couple of days after a gruelling League Cup tie against Tottenham had gone to extra time, only six games into the season, before they had really hit their stride and with the likes of Cesc Fabregas and Robin Van Persie sidelined. You'll recall we took





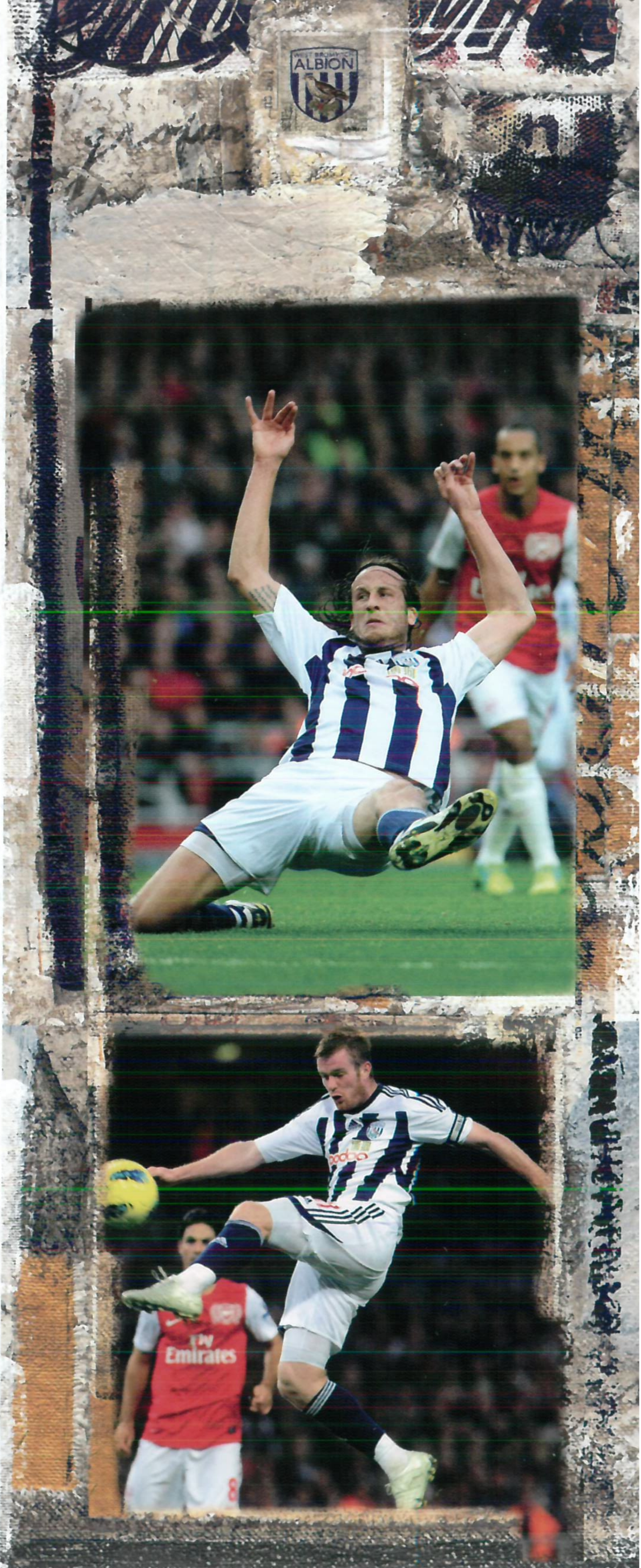
full advantage, leaving with three goals and three points.

It was a little different this time. Après un été très horrible pour Monsieur Wenger, during which Fabregas and Nasri slung their respective hooks, his team has begun to prove that rumours of their demise have all been a little premature. It might not quite be the imperious Arsenal of old, but the swagger is slowly returning as five wins and a draw in their previous six fixtures illustrated.

More than that, Arsenal were refreshed by the extraordinary 5-3 mauling of Chelsea a week afore and in Van Persie, they have perhaps the best player in the country at the moment, certainly the most dangerous, for the Dutchman is in the form of his life, 13 goals for the Gunners adding to another four for Holland thus far this term. And some of his mates aren't playing so badly either, Walcott finding the maturity we've been waiting for, Arteta looking even better than in his Everton days, the returning Vermaelen giving Arsenal a more solid appearance at the back, Ramsey disguising the absence of Wilshere in fine fashion in the middle of the park.

Albeit that Albion have closed the gap in the last couple of years, the nature of the Premier League is such that when we take on the big boys, you are looking for two things to happen, especially away from home. They need to be off the pace and we need to be playing out of our skins. Neither was the case at the Emirates, and nor was luck on our side, in much the same way as it had failed to show up against Liverpool a week before. But whereas we could argue that ill fortune played a hefty part in the Liverpool loss, in all conscience nobody could make similar claims for the defeat in north London, for the Gunners were the better side throughout and deserving of their points.

Which is not to say that the Throstles were mere spectators or that they threw in the towel against superior forces, for neither is true. For long periods they managed to contain Arsenal's pass, pass, pass philosophy, keeping the home



side at bay without necessarily carrying too much of a threat of our own. Some times, when a team like Arsenal strikes up the band, it's about the best you can do.

Right from the outset, Arsenal were intent upon slicking the ball around in their traditional style, probing for openings, patient, always patient, hoping to shift an Albion man out of position and then attack the space in an instant. But our discipline and shape was good in that opening phase, so much so that a quarter of an hour passed with Arsenal's only sight of goal coming from a Santos free-kick that sailed over from distance.

The sight of blood streaming from Jonas Olsson's cheek, the victim of a stray, accidental stud,

did little to calm our nerves. Unlike James Morrison, off for what seemed an age as a head wound was tended to in the home game with Arsenal last term, Olsson was able to be dealt with pitchside and was quickly back in the fray after being stitched up and then stripped off to take on fresh, bloodless kit. He returned to watch as we pieced together our first decent move of the game, Steven Reid and Chris Brunt involved before Simon Cox's low cross was snaffled by the goalkeeper.

Luck deserted us shortly thereafter as Cox was involved in a halfway line collision, the free-kick going Arsenal's way when it could easily have been ours. They took it swiftly, Ramsey played a bisecting ball for Walcott to

gallop onto between full-back and centre-half. The England man's shot was well saved by Ben Foster but the ball squirmed away, inevitably to Van Persie, a magnet for chances at present, and he had no difficulty in tucking the ball into the gaping goal.

The sheer pace of Walcott and Gervinho was a perpetual threat, Gervinho the width of his centre parting offside in the 27th minute, Foster producing a fine save to deny him just in case, but Albion still had ambitions of their own. In the 35th minute, a sharp interception by Morrison gave him the opportunity to dart past a couple of challenges before finding Jerome Thomas, the winger cutting inside before being blocked off by Koscielny.

ARSENAL		WEST BROMWICH ALBION	
SZCZESNY	I	FOSTER	
JENKINSON	II	REID	
SANTOS	III	JONES	
SONG	IV	DORRANS	
VERMAELEN	V	OLSSON	
KOSCIELNY	VI	MCAULEY	
WALCOTT	VII	BRUNT	
RAMSEY	VIII	MORRISON	
 VAN PERSIE	IX	COX	
 ARTETA	X	GERA	
 GERVINHO	XI	THOMAS	

SUBS

Rosicky > Ramsey 71
Benayoun > Gervinho 71
Arshavin > Walcott 77
Subs not used:
Fabianski, Park, Djourou,
Mertesacker

Tchoyi > Gera 63
Mulumbu > Cox 71
Thorne > Dorrans 80
Subs not used:
Fulop, Shorey,
Fortune, Dawson

-  Goal
-  Yellow card
-  Red card

Referee Oliver ignored the penalty claims, particularly galling for Thomas having been penalised for a not dissimilar challenge the week before.

Arsenal took full value of their let off by doubling the lead in the 39th minute after the Baggies struggled to fully clear a corner. The ball eventually found Song on the left hand edge of the Albion area and his flighted ball to the back post was hooked back into the danger area by Van Persie, Gervinho completely missing his kick as he followed up. That allowed the ball to run free towards the penalty spot where Vermaelen was swiftest to react, drilling the ball in with an exemplary show of technique.

Vermaelen might have added his second in the 52nd minute when he glanced a header wide of goal from a corner, but the Throstles maintained their composure and an intelligent phase of possession involving Morrison, Reid and Brunt ended with Graham Dorrans putting a right foot shot wide from 20 yards. Further attacking play in the 58th minute saw Brunt flash an acrobatic scissors kick over the bar as he looked to capitalise on a back header from Gareth McAuley, but on the hour, Gervinho reminded us of his threat with lovely swift control from a Ramsey pass, firing a shot just wide on the turn.

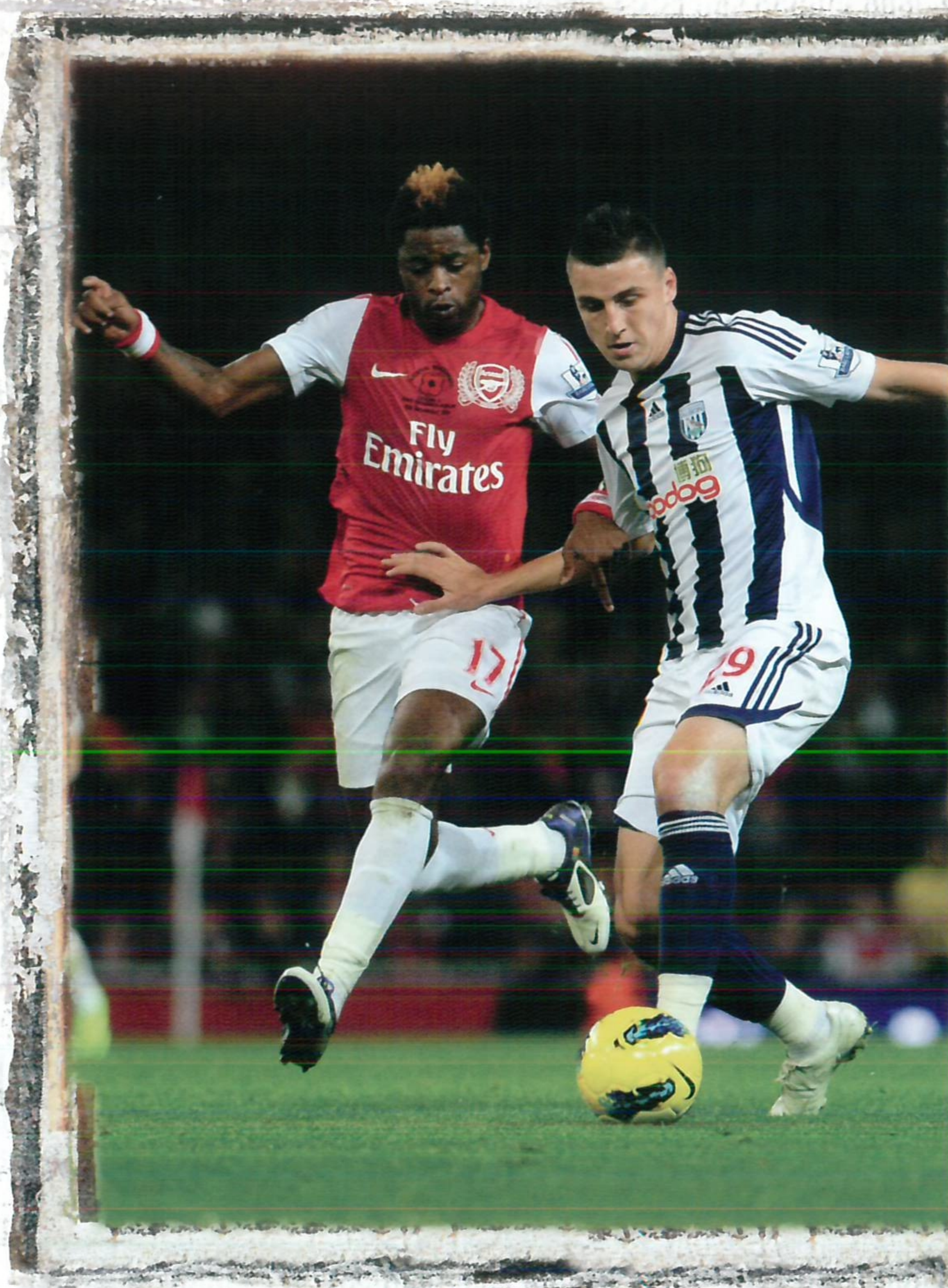
The returning Zoltan Gera was substituted moments later, the Hungarian's luck having run out too – who wants to come back to fitness only to find you're playing Arsenal after all? There was enough evidence of the great man's energy and vision to suggest that he'll be every bit as valuable to us second time around once he really finds his feet, but this was a day when opportunities to shine were few and far between.

Not so for Foster though who made sharp saves in quick succession from Gervinho and Song, but he was helpless to stop Arsenal helping themselves to a third in the 74th minute, a swift counter-attack seeing Rosicky released down their right by Van Persie, then playing the ball into his skipper whose cushioned lay

off invited Arteta to direct a shot just inside the post from the edge of the area. No stopping that one.

Consolation might have been ours when Morrison played a neat pass to allow Somen Tchoyi to defeat the offside trap, but in waiting for the ball to sit up, Arsenal defenders got back to cover and blocked the Cameroonian's shot away. Reid almost scored too in the 87th minute, a powerful header that drew a save from Szczesny, the goalkeeper catching a drive from Morrison moments later.

Too little, too late as Arsenal eased off with the game won. The endeavour and the energy could not be questioned, but when Arsenal are in this mood, they're pretty hard to live with. Just ask John Terry.



**WHEN ARSENAL
ARE IN THIS
MOOD, THEY'RE
PRETTY HARD
TO LIVE
WITH. JUST
ASK JOHN
TERRY.**

JUDGEMENT

ROY
HODGSON



Unfortunately, we just have to accept that it wasn't our day today, but I'm not

prepared to accept any criticism of the players in terms of them not working hard. I thought the shape of the team was quite good and, if we were undone, we were undone by quality.

"We put in one hell of a shift and I thought we had to because we were up against a very good, in-form Arsenal team that were rampant. You could accuse us of lacking a bit of quality at times. And you could accuse us, in the first half, of looking to play the ball forward too quickly at times. But I certainly will not agree with anyone that the players did not put in a shift. That would be an accusation bordering on scandalous!

"The first goal came from a free-kick situation that the referee decided was a foul from our centre-forward on their centre-back. I would respectfully point out that it could just as easily have been given the other way round. From the quick free-kick, we got caught out and they scored their first goal. The second goal was somewhat unfortunate in the sense Dorrans should clear the ball but tries to play out of trouble and concedes the corner. From

the corner, Brunt slips over. Had he not slipped, he might have prevented the cross and then we might have gone into half-time only 1-0 down and it might have been a bit easier. But we were playing against a good team. At 2-0, it was always going to be a difficult task in the second half. The best we could do was stick to our guns, which we did.

"There is no doubt that Shane Long and Odemwingie - our first-choice centre-forwards - would have caused Arsenal more problems because they're different types of players. We've got injuries and a lot of changes in the team and it was interesting for me today to see how players would possibly cope. The forward changes were not all forced upon me because Tchoyi started last week's game, but Cox has been pushing for a chance and deserved one. Gera is now fit again so it was a good opportunity to play him. And when it comes to Mulumbu, Dorrans and Morrison, quite frankly, that's always a difficult decision to make because there is not an awful lot to choose between them. If one of them plays

and has a good game I made the right choice and if one plays and doesn't have a good game I made the wrong choice.

"I have to say, I didn't think it was a clear-cut penalty for us against Thomas. But, of course, we're still smarting from the penalty award that really put us on the back foot last week against Liverpool. You could certainly say - without any fear of contradiction from any fair-minded person - that today's incident was every bit a penalty as the one we conceded last week. That's for sure. But then I don't think it should have been a penalty last week, so perhaps I should also be fair enough to say I didn't expect a penalty this time, either."



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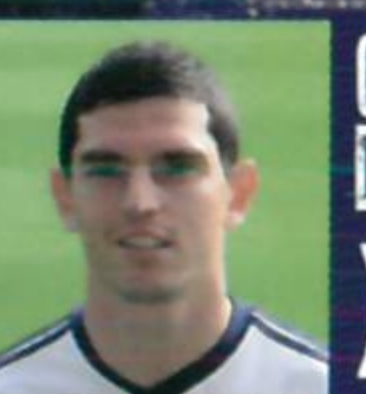
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BOLTON WANDERERS



hey don't do things by halves up in Bolton you know, certainly not this season. When they win, they sure know how to win as Queens Park Rangers (4-0) and Stoke City (5-0) can testify, results over which your average Throstle could also enthuse given our antipathy to those two sides for assorted reasons.

But if when they're good, they're very, very good, when they're bad they're just horrid, just like Longfellow's "Little Girl" – the poem, not a bit of salacious gossip, do try not to be smutty. On the receiving end of threes from Arsenal, Liverpool, Swansea City and Manchester City, five each from Manchester United and Chelsea, for Bolton it seems as if it never rains but it pours.

They'll be hoping that that 5-0 thrashing of Stoke acts as something of an exorcism for them because it was that defeat by the same score at Wembley Stadium in the FA Cup semi-final of last season that really saw Bolton hit the sudden slump that they're now trying to fight their way out of. The scars of that afternoon have understandably taken a long time to heal, Bolton on the brink of a final for the first time since the golden days of Nat Lofthouse who passed away last term, only to find themselves blown away by the Potters.

For pretty much the first time since he moved south from St Johnstone, Owen Coyle has found himself at the helm of a struggling team. He guided Burnley to promotion then made a pretty decent fist of the first part of their first Barclays Premier League season and from taking over at the Reebok, not only were Bolton in the ascendancy but there were plenty of hefty compliments about



the quality of the football they were playing, in marked contrast to that of his predecessors.

Coyle is made of strong stuff and concerned about Bolton's early season form as he will be, there'll be no shifting his ideas about how Bolton should

progress over the season. Indeed, if you isolate the last four games between the international breaks, the Trotters collected six points like ourselves, suggestive of improving form and a desire to nip up the league table a bit sharpish. Following the Stoke game, Coyle

was understandably bullish about the prospects for the rest of the season, saying, "The performance was one of high intensity from start to finish. It was outstanding, a great performance. Every player, to a man, showed a level of performance today that can be a catalyst for us moving forward. We had to stand up and be counted today. The talking had to stop and we had to deliver. And we did. The players were up for the challenge".

Bolton fans will be forgiven for wondering if that team is going to continue turning up for the rest of the season, but such was the comprehensive nature of the win, you'd have to think that a corner might just have been turned, particularly as they broke the home hoodoo by getting a first Reebok win of the campaign.

If they are on the up and up then, as has been the case for so long, Kevin Davies is going to be at the centre of it all for them. His opportunist early strike for Wanderers against Stoke set his team on its way and his role as

the archetypal English centre-forward has been the pivotal position for the club, even as Coyle has tried to shift the emphasis in their football from long ball to something less obviously direct. Not the most prolific of strikers – that was his second of the season,

the 72nd in almost 350 games for Bolton – his game has much more to it than being the marksman, his play characterised by bringing others into the game around him.

He's also a perfect target for winger Chris Eagles, a summer signing from Coyle's former club,



Burnley. Eagles started out at Manchester United but found the competition pretty stiff there, going out on loan to Watford, Sheffield Wednesday and NEC Nijmegen. He really began to come into his own at Turf Moor and the two goals he knocked in against Stoke suggests that he's now acclimatised to life at the Reebok too. Turning 26 today, he has plenty of football behind him with over 230 games in the English game under his belt and really looks to be coming into his own as a top flight footballer.

Ivan Klasnic also contributed two goals to the Stoke victory continuing what has been a decent opening to the season for him, taking his tally to five goals thus far from six starts in the league. Given the Croatian international only managed seven in the whole of last season in league and cup, he has clearly stepped things up a notch in Bolton's time of need.

If there's power up front, the middle of the park is of the no nonsense variety as well with the addition of Nigel Reo-Coker to partner Fabrice Muamba, both of them having been with the Birmingham clubs, Villa and Blues. Reo-Coker left Villa Park this summer after a lengthy association turned sour. He went to Villa four years ago for £7.5million from West Ham and built a reputation as both a winner and user of the ball in midfield, a reputation he is busily enhancing now that he's back playing regular football for the Trotters.

Former Birmingham man Muamba returned to the side against Stoke – he's only started five games thus far this season – and his importance was swiftly underlined as he marshalled the midfield, dashing back and forth to snuff out trouble and then prompt fresh attacks. One of those powerhouse defensive midfielders that most teams seem to be looking for, Muamba has been a regular for Bolton since his 2008 move from Birmingham for £5million.

Mark Davies is another who has played in these parts before, starting his career at Wolverhampton, which will doubtless endear him to all the Albion supporters today. He went to Bolton with a glowing

reputation and if he hasn't quite become a regular yet, appearing as a sub more often than in the starting line up, his ability to create opportunities is not in question.

If Bolton currently sport a club legend up front in Kevin Davies, it's the same situation at the other end of the operation with Finland's Jussi Jaaskelainen still between the posts some 14 years after he arrived at the club. One of the major reasons why Bolton have enjoyed such positive fortunes over that period, 520 games into his career and still only 36, he could well be keeping them out at the Reebok – goals and young goalkeepers – for a few years to come yet.

The unassuming Jasskelainen has been one of the genuine stars of Premier League history, much under rated elsewhere but recognised as a true giant by the supporters of his club.

Very highly rated elsewhere of course is Gary Cahill, subject of a long, drawn out transfer saga over the summer which probably did him and his club very little good as they were preparing for the new campaign ahead. Now very well established in the England fold too, not least with the problems that have beset John Terry and Rio Ferdinand, Cahill can look forward to a summer at the European Championships, exposure to the best the continent can offer only



adding to his experience and enhancing his transfer value.

David Wheater was expected to be another England regular at the heart of defence when he started his career off as a youngster at Middlesbrough, but still only 24, there is time yet for him to realise that potential. He's displaced Zat Knight in the starting line up in recent weeks which is no mean feat given he's been a Bolton regular for a couple of years now, an indication that Wheater is achieving the consistency he needs to interest the England hierarchy.

At the opposite end of the experience spectrum to the likes of Davies and Jaaskelainen is Joe Riley who has just one Premier League game to his name, playing at full-back in the Stoke win. He won plenty of plaudits for his performance and a star of the future might well have been born. It was star quality that Bolton were surely after when they signed up Turkey's Tuncay from Wolfsburg in the summer, bringing him back to England where he's played for Stoke and Middlesbrough. He hasn't quite got going yet in the Bolton shirt, but his trickery and ability on the ball means that as the season progresses, he will doubtless become increasingly influential as he slots into their way of playing and thinking.

Darren Pratley should follow a similar learning curve after trading Swansea City for Bolton in the summer. The midfielder has played some part in every game this far this season but with competition at a premium in the Bolton engine room, he hasn't found it easy to get a regular starting berth in the Premier League. His energy and ability to score goals from midfield are both great assets and few doubt that Bolton made a shrewd Bosman signing in Pratley. And if even the talented Martin Petrov can find himself on the bench, as he did for the Stoke game, it merely underlines just how much quality Owen Coyle has at his disposal.

David Ngog was another addition to that store of talented players when he made the switch from Liverpool in the summer. He opened his account a month ago,

scoring in the 3-1 win at Wigan Athletic, but the £4million man will be looking to score plenty more in order to justify that transfer fee in the weeks to come.

What's that? We've forgotten somebody you say? As if we'd leave out Paul Robinson, left-back of this parish for six years and very nearly 250 games in his time, winning promotion under both Gary Megson and Tony Mowbray – and if that's not an illustration of his versatility, managing to keep those contrasting managers happy, I'm not sure what is. The grand old man of the tackle will be 33 next month, but Robbo is still more than sprightly enough to leave a dent on the shin

of anybody willing to try and get past him. He should be past the 600 games mark in English football by the time this season is through, evidence of the lasting contribution he's made to the game over the last decade and more.

It'll be a far more buoyant Bolton that rolls up at The Hawthorns this afternoon than it might have been, that Stoke success firing them up good and proper. Testimony to Owen Coyle's ability to get his team to regroup and then kick on again, his only frustration will be that the international break might have disturbed the momentum they'd have otherwise got from that victory. We can but hope.



JOY IN THE



here have been a smattering of individuals who have made pilgrimages south

from Bolton to embrace religious orders at The Hawthorns, and, by and large, they've been a pretty remarkable lot, including some of the most important footballers in our history.

That said, one or two have failed to take the sharp cutting implement to the waiting mustard and we will dispense with them first. It's hard to know if it was Mike Gallagher or Franz Carr who had the most ignominious spell with the Throstles, Gallagher lining up just once at outside-left in January 1953 as managerless Albion, awaiting the arrival of Vic Buckingham, were thrashed 5-0 by Burnley. Carr, also a winger, made one start for the Baggies in 1998 – substituted by one Robert Taylor of whom more later – and three sub



BEN GARFIELD



ALF BENTLEY



BOB TAYLOR



FRANZ CARR



HARRY BOSTON



JOHN THOMAS



NELSON HOWARTH



RICHARD SNEEKES

PRESENCE OF ANGELS

appearances, the last also coming in a 5-0 humbling, away at Charlton Athletic.

The mighty John Thomas – “Johnny T, from Wednesbury, he’s got a stall on the market” as popular song had it – returned to his ancestral home from Bolton in 1989, but was largely a sub as he played second fiddle to Don Goodman and Colin West. Nonetheless, he did score four Albion goals, including a League Cup hat-trick at Bradford City as we overturned a 3-1 first leg deficit to win on the away goals rule with the scores tied at 6-6.

Bethel Robinson might only have managed four games for the Albion between 1889 and 1891 when he played as a no-nonsense right-back who looked to kick the ball as far as it would go – they’re building a statue of him in Stoke – but what games they were. He turned out three

times in the FA Cup run of 1889, including in the semi-final defeat to Preston. He had to wait two years for his fourth and final game, again in an FA Cup semi-final, as we lost to Blackburn Rovers. Bit of a Jonah really.

Ben Garfield was here a little later than Robinson, playing here from 1896-1902 and winning his England cap during that spell, playing on the left flank. He smacked in 38 goals in his 117 Albion games, but could not prevent us suffering a first ever relegation in 1900/01, though by then he was a more peripheral figure and so we can’t put all the blame on him.

Coming here in 1926 with a suitably solid northern name of Nelson Howarth – ‘Owarth if you want to get technical – joined the Throstles in the twilight of his career, not that he realised it at the time given he was only 21. Sadly, a string of injuries limited him to 63 games for Albion, largely at left-half, before in 1929 he had to give up the ghost and retire. He was followed to The Hawthorns by right winger Harry Boston – footballing wise, we have no idea of his politics – and he had an important role to play, scoring three times during the unique double season of 1930/31. He lost his place that year to Tommy Glidden, the skipper moving to the flank from inside-forward in order to accommodate a talented young goalscorer called WG Richardson.

Our final three who handed in their Trotters in exchange for singing from the gilded throstles’ cage all made monumental contributions to the Albion cause. When Richard Sneekes arrived in March 1996, Alan Buckley had just fearlessly led us through 11 straight league defeats – 13 out of 14 in the end – and a return to the third tier looked imminent. And then arrived the Flying Dutchman to score 10 times in 13

games as we collected 24 points from them to finish 11th. And to think, the pinnacle of his Albion career – writing a column in the programme – was still a decade away.

Alf Bentley had a similarly epic spell in front of goal during one season at The Hawthorns, coming into the team midway through the 1919/20 campaign and going on to blitz 15 goals in 24 games to help us finish the job and win the First Division title for the first and only time – Bentley’s feats were all the more remarkable given he’d been wounded in France during the Great War. He enjoyed a very prolific Albion career, scoring 47 goals in 105 games between 1913 and 1922. After retiring, he found a job in the steel industry, a fate unlikely to be awaiting Carlos Tevez, and died aged just 52.

And finally, there is Bob Taylor. Having already done enough to be an Albion legend in his first spell here, his second was greater yet. Returning from Bolton, cape billowing in the breeze, just like Sneekes, Super Bob found Albion about to get relegated to the third division or whatever they were calling it in those days. Five goals in the last six games, including one against Charlton on the final day – Sneekes got the other – kept Albion in the division. As if that weren’t enough, two years later he scored four in the last seven to see us overtake the team from Staffordshire, scoring the goal against Portsmouth that sealed a first promotion to the Premier League. They don’t make ‘em like that anymore.



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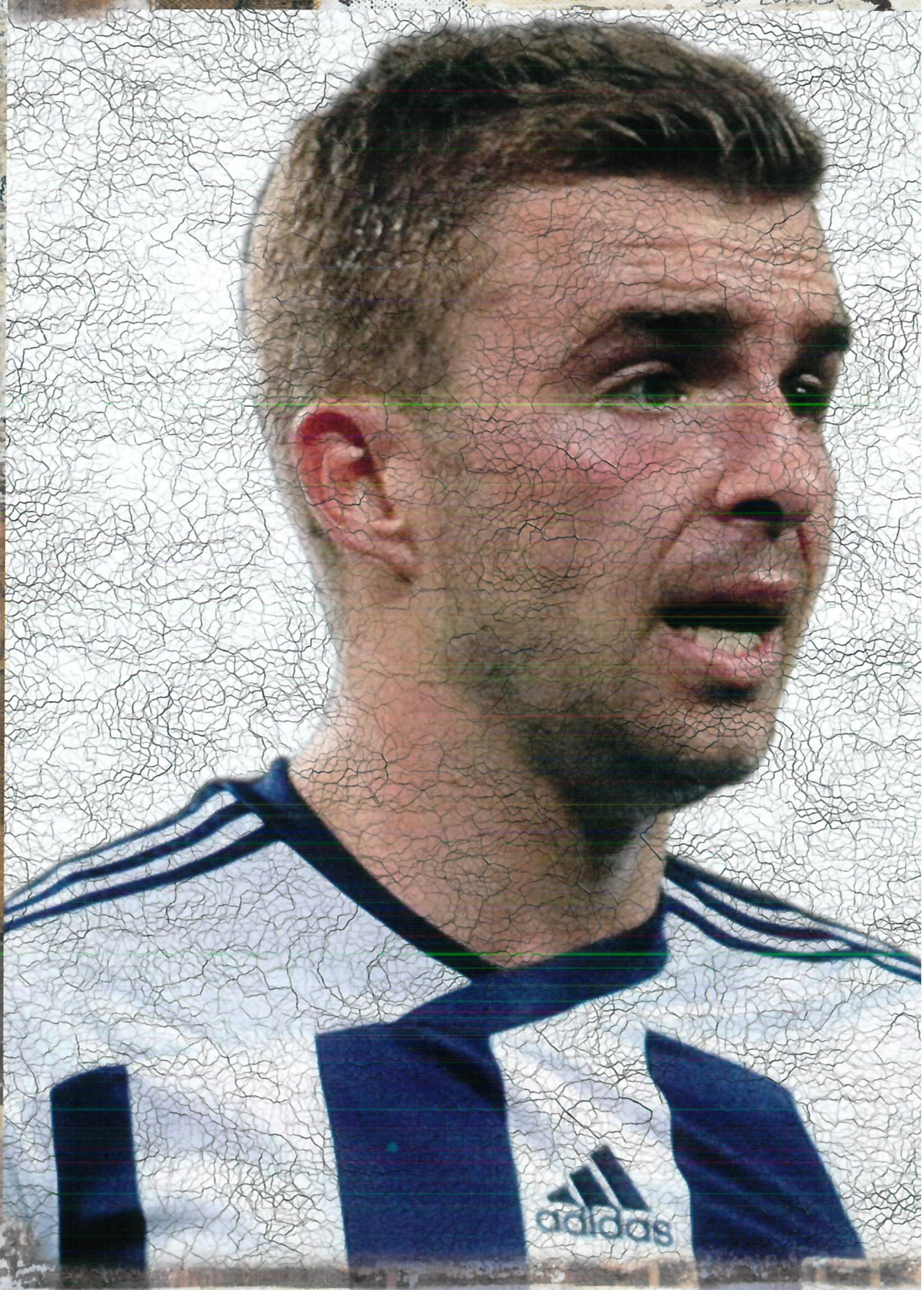
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PLAY THE BLUES

They say that playing the blues is an emotional, cathartic experience. Talk to James Morrison and you'll find that playing for the Blues, donning that Scotland shirt, is exactly the same...

of the men
at the begin





lessed as we are to be in the Black Country, in the very heart of England, sometimes it's difficult to feel part of a bigger picture, part of Great Britain, of the United Kingdom. In footballing terms, that's especially so because in spite of the explosion of coverage of the beautiful game these last 20 years, it is still, inevitably, England centric. The other home nations, and stretching the point, the Republic of Ireland too, are nations we barely consider, unless they qualify for a tournament ahead of England, at which point we immediately adopt them as honorary Englishmen and follow their fortunes avidly before forgetting them again.

In such circumstances, stereotypes and anecdotes endure, and for many of a certain age that means that Scotland is still the land of comical goalkeepers and the butt of all those bad jokes from the "Saint & Greavesie" era of television. The Scottish absence from recent tournaments and the failure of their clubs in European football in recent times has only reinforced that impression, but things are stirring north of the border.

Paradoxically, the lack of money in the SPL has meant that clubs have had to blood young footballers much earlier than they would otherwise have done and that has meant the national side, which has impressed at youth level for the last few years, is now taking delivery of some very good senior internationals who are looking to get the country back to the halcyon days of the 1970s and 1980s when qualification for the big competitions was a matter of routine.

Our own James Morrison is part of that renaissance of course – as is Graham Dorrans – and he can see light at the end of that long tunnel for the Scots, a bit of positive thinking reaping real dividends for them.

"There is a bit of a mentality among the supporters that thinks Scotland will always find a way of messing up a good position because that has happened a few times in the past to the national team. I think what we've got now though is a fairly young group of players and we haven't really been involved in any of that, so there is a more positive kind of thinking amongst us.

"Certainly when I was first involved in the squads it was an older set up, but the manager has tried to bring together a group of similar ages and outlook, he's brought in a lot more of the players who've been involved with the Under 21s and I think that has helped because we've played a lot of games together but we have a lot of years to come as a group. If we can keep bleeding young players as they become ready and just adding to the squad like that, then we will be in a healthy position.

"The younger age groups have done pretty well, there are some good players in there and they've spurred us on a little bit. There's real competition for places which you can see because Dozzer wasn't even on the bench for the last qualifiers, which underlines the strength we have in depth. Where things have really kicked on is that we've got more players playing for big teams now, playing at high level week after week, and that can only sharpen you up as a player".

Evidence that Scotland are moving in the right direction came with the European Championship qualifiers. Pitched in with Spain and the Czech Republic, they came agonisingly close to reaching the play-off games but even in ultimate failure, they've put down a marker for future qualification groups. Even so, James was clearly disappointed at missing out this time.

"With the European Championships, we were very close to qualifying for the play-offs, but that's been the story for Scotland for a little while now. Obviously there was a very dodgy

penalty that the Czech Republic got against us at Hampden Park to get a draw and in the end, that made all the difference.

"Saying that, you can't just blame one incident for not finishing second to Spain and we did slip up ourselves at times. Away to Lithuania in the first game of the group, we came away with a 0-0 draw when maybe we should have got the victory and looking back on it, possibly we should have had a bit more of a go at the Czech Republic when we played in Prague. We went with a pretty defensive set up and ended up losing 1-0 and perhaps we gave them a bit more respect than maybe we should have, because we showed that we were at least as good as them when we played at Hampden later in the group.

"But when you come to the last few games, decisions became even more important and that game at home against the Czech Republic finished 2-2 when their penalty was pretty debateable and then we had one turned down a couple of minutes later that was just as much a penalty as theirs. That just killed us really. If the decisions had gone our way, we'd have won the game and even though we didn't play that well on the day, we'd have done the job and finished second in the group. It was a big disappointment because so much hard work goes into it and to miss out for things like that is hard to take.

"They are such small groups with so few games, so if something does go wrong or you get a bad result, there's not much time to claw it back. On top of that, we were in the five-team group which made it worse, and then you had Spain in it as well, so it almost becomes four teams. When there





are only eight games in the group, two against Spain, one mistake can really screw it up for you. Missing out on the play-offs was really frustrating because it would have been interesting to get involved in that and over two games, anything can happen”.

The rest of the international season will see Scotland playing friendlies, fine tuning, perhaps introducing a fresh face or two, because all attention will be focused on the World Cup qualification which starts next season, the prize being a place at the World Cup in Brazil. You don't need much more incentive to kick on than that, do you? If the European Championships came just a shade too early for Craig Levein's resculpted squad, it could be that they're hitting their peak as a unit just in time for the next tilt at qualifying. With the draw already having been made, Scotland find themselves in a fascinating group that looks too hard to call at this stage, as Morrison explains.

“The World Cup group is a pretty difficult one, probably harder than the European Championship group in some ways. But I do think we're a better team for the experience of the last two years so hopefully we can end up in the top two this time and then qualify for the World Cup in Brazil. We're in with Belgium, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Wales so it's hard to pick out from that just who you would have as the top two in that group.

“I think Belgium especially are a bit underrated because they have some very good young players coming through and they'll just be getting better. If you look through their team, I think they have to start out as favourites. There's Fellaini, Kompany, Lukaku, Dembele, there's Eden Hazard from Lille who everybody is trying to buy

for £20million at the moment, and they're another young team who are probably improved from playing in the Euro qualifiers.

“Croatia have been regular qualifiers for all the tournaments for years so even if they're not quite the team they were a few years ago, they'll be dangerous. Serbia just missed out on the Euro play-offs so they're a strong side and we've played Macedonia before and we know that they're no pushovers either. It doesn't help us especially to have Wales in the group because those games have an extra something riding on them, and they've had some really good results in the last few months under Gary Speed, and they're improving fast.

“It is a very interesting group and I think you'll see all the teams taking points off one another, I don't think there'll be a runaway winner like we had with Spain. Obviously it's going to be important that we get a lot of points from our home games”.

The opportunity to play some football at one of the great football venues certainly had a bearing on James' decision to represent Scotland given his dual nationality. The place has certainly lived up to expectations.

“Hampden Park is a really good place to play your football. It's not huge like it used to be years ago when they got nearly 150,000 people in there, it's much smaller since they redeveloped it and went all-seater, but it creates a fantastic atmosphere. It's electric even though the seats are quite a way back from the pitch, the place is bouncing. The national anthem gets it going, they let off fireworks and they do all they can to really charge the place up and the supporters do respond to it. When it's going well, it's as good as anywhere to play.

“Everything about it is great, it's got that old, traditional

feel to it which is so important because you want to feel that you're following on from the great players of the past when you put the shirt on. They've managed to create that mood there. It's right in the middle of things, there are houses all round it as you go in, it's not isolated, so you get a feel for the game and the atmosphere on your way in. It couldn't be better really and it's done wonders for me, playing there and playing for Scotland”.

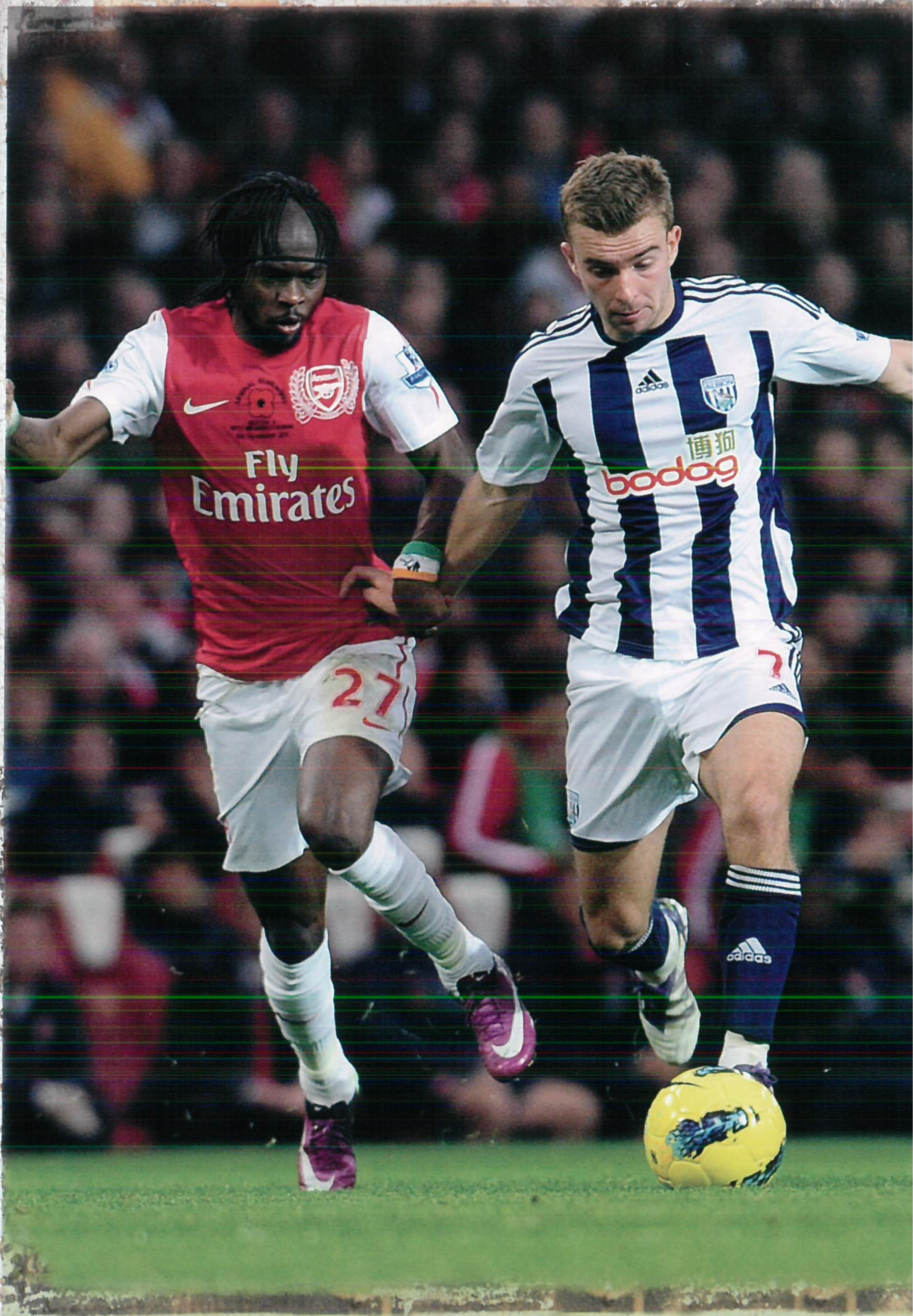
James has become a central figure in the new Scotland, but he's also a pretty seasoned international now, having had four years in the set up.

“Apart from when I was injured a couple of years ago, I've been regularly involved right from my call-up and I'm very proud to have played so many games for Scotland and hopefully, there are a lot more to come in future. Obviously when I first joined there was various talk about whether I should have been able to play for the country given I'd represented England at the junior levels, but it was never an issue for me. I was delighted to be asked and I've had four great years with the team. I do feel a part of it all, and I've done that by getting my head down, giving my best every time I put the shirt on and showing everybody how much it means to me. If you do that, you can quickly get people on your side”.

If there isn't a major tournament on his CV yet, playing for Scotland has still given him the opportunity to play against some of the very best in world football, experiences that he has brought back to The Hawthorns to help improve his own game.

“Playing international football is a great honour obviously, but it's a really good opportunity as well. You have to





test yourself against some great players, you come up against all styles of football and you get to go to places that probably you would never have gone to in your life otherwise. Going to Lithuania was a bit of an eye opener for example, it's not a place you'd ever be going on holiday I don't think, but I think it's really interesting to go and see these places, see a bit of the world, and I think it helps you grow as a person. Playing in the different atmospheres, seeing a little bit of the different cultures, it is good to have that change of scene.

"International football is strange because it looks slower on TV, especially compared with the Premier League, but I can tell you, it's just as quick. I'm always shattered after the games, mentally as well as physically because you come up against some great teams and players and you know you can never switch off for a second or you're in trouble.

"The opportunity to play against some of the best teams in the world can only help you, and to have come up against Spain in the qualifiers and Brazil in a friendly was fantastic. When I've retired, to be able to say that I played against that great Spain team, who will be looked at as one of the best of all-time, that's going to be something to look back on.

"It was such an eye opener to be on the field against them and it's something I will always remember for the rest of my life. Trying to get close to players like Xavi and Iniesta is a real test, I can promise you. Thinking back to the game at Hampden where we pegged them back to 2-2 from 2-0 down, the atmosphere was incredible. But like Scotland do, we threw it away in the last few minutes with a stupid goal and lost 3-2!

"The game away from home was something else again

because they were just in full flow and you have to work so hard just to get anywhere near them. You come off the pitch absolutely knackered after games like that and even though we'd lost, you can't beat that feeling of coming in after you've left every ounce of effort out on the pitch, it's very satisfying in its way. They are an incredible side and though they've dominated for the last four or five years, you look at them and you think that it could go on for a while longer yet.

"They are such a difficult team to play when they're really going for it. They're so patient but

*They're so patient
but they also know
when to suddenly
strike. Their
possession football
is amazing and
you just work so
hard without ever
seeing the ball*

they also know when to suddenly strike. Their possession football is amazing and you just work so hard without ever seeing the ball. You try to put ways in to stop them but sometimes, they are just too good and you have to hold your hands up. We gave them a couple of good games, we caused them a few problems of our own and even in Spain, at 3-1 down we had a great chance to put it back to 3-2 with 10 minutes left and if that had gone in, who knows? But the fact we've given them two good games is something that has given us a lot of confidence and I think we

feel that the team is beginning to get somewhere.

"Since Craig Levein has come in, I think we've progressed as a team. He likes us to play our football when we can, we play a 4-3-3 system, we've got a lot of midfield players who like to get on the ball, and we've got strikers like Kenny Miller and Craig Mackail-Smith who like to work hard, make good runs, and that system works well for us. The manager doesn't really give us that much information about the opposition, he trusts us a team to go out and do our jobs and he lets us play. He doesn't overload you with things to think about and with internationals, where you only have a few days to prepare for games, that's probably a sensible way of doing it. It's worked well for him so far and I think there's a bit of optimism about the team just now".

Playing for your country can have its disadvantages though and on occasion over the last few years, players like James, Chris Brunt, Zoltan Gera and plenty of others have come back from a trip with their country only to be parked on the bench when they return. It's inevitably frustrating, but Morrison is philosophical about it.

"The travelling can be tiring and the downside is that it's cost me my place in the team here a couple of times, coming back from international games and going onto the bench. Sometimes you do get punished for that in a sense and that's happened under different managers to different





players. I've never felt that playing for Scotland has left me too tired to play for West Brom on the Saturday, but obviously that's down to the manager or the coach and what he thinks. I can understand their point of view, particularly if they've been working with the team while you've been away and you might only be back for one or maybe two training sessions out of a fortnight's work. It's improved a bit since the international game has moved from Wednesday to Tuesday because in the past, you might not get back in training until Friday and that was awkward. But as long as I haven't got injured while I'm away, I'm always ready to play, so hopefully it won't be an issue that often.

"What the internationals do is disrupt the season a bit and it can feel as if the league hasn't really got going because we've had three breaks so far which seems a lot. Personally, I've switched between Albion and Scotland and played in a number of different positions already this season, so that makes it all feel a bit more stop / start as well. The variety is nice, and having the ability to be adaptable is something you always need to have in your locker because it does help you get games. Like all the lads here do, I believe in my ability, I think I should be playing regularly, and if that means playing through the middle one week or out wide another, then so be it, I think that says something about you as a player if you can do that".

After featuring in Scotland's win in Cyprus just over a week ago, the attention turns to all things Albion for the next few months and particularly to today's encounter with an old friend at left-back.

"It'll be nice to see Robbo again, I still keep in touch with

him from time to time. He was a good servant to the club and I'm sure he'll be fired up for this afternoon and flying into the challenges as usual. They've had a tough start to the season at Bolton but that win they got over Stoke before the break will have done them a world of good and we need to be wary of them this afternoon because they should be high on confidence again after that. They're still in the bottom three so you know they'll be coming here desperate to get a good result and drag themselves away from the bottom end and that will make them dangerous because they've shown over a number of years how good they

"I think it's quite good for the league because it just means there are even more great players playing"

are at grinding out results when they need to.

"It's a very big game because from the way things have started, it looks as if it'll be very similar to last season, lots of teams on the same sort of points and all the issues going to late in the season. Like I said about Scotland, it's important that we get a lot of points from our home games, especially against teams like Bolton who are below us at the moment, because a win today would give us a bit of a cushion from the bottom three, which is so important, as we proved last season.

"It looks as though ten or 11 teams are all going to be around each other as it was last season,

the newly promoted teams are doing well, so while it makes it pretty exciting for the neutrals, it's not ideal if you're playing when things are dead tight! To be honest, we still haven't played that many games yet so it's hard to be making any real predictions, it won't be until we get to Christmas and the new year that we'll really see the league taking shape. Now that we're playing week after week, that's when the size and strength of your squad starts to come into play and that gives you a better indication of what teams can really cope with the demands of the season and which ones can't.

"At the other end of the table, it does look as if Manchester City could run away with things. Looking on from outside, it's a bit like what Chelsea did seven or eight years ago, but with even more money and even more players. At the moment, I think it's quite good for the league because it just means there are even more great players playing in this country.

"It is a daunting challenge to come up against them, a bit like coming up against Spain, but we played Manchester United last Christmas, same time of year as City will be here, and we gave them a great game, we should have got at least a draw out of it, and I should have had the "Goal of the Season" out of it as well. I still can't believe Coxy's goal won by one vote – he must have had all his relations voting for it!

"We put a great performance on in that game and lost to a couple of sloppy goals and that was the story of our season for a while through December and January. That United game killed us for a while, we had a bad run after that, because we'd put so much into it, but if we could match United, it'll be good to try and do the same when City come next month".





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PARISH NOTICES

FIRST TROPHY OF THE YEAR!

Albion's matchday programme, a double award winner as the Best in the Premier League last season, has picked up from where it left by winning a first trophy of the season.

The Midlands Programme Club has voted "The Book Of Albion" as the Premier League Programme of 2011/12, saying that it "stood out from the rest".

Among the other comments from those who voted were: "brilliant value for money"; "great articles and lots to read"; "loved the olde-style features"; "so different to others with its vintage look"; "excellent bound issue"; "great pictures and quality photography"; "in a league of its own, unlike all other issues".

Thanks to all involved and especially to all of you who pick up your copy and risk putting your back out under the strain at every home game. We salute you.



NATIONAL TREASURES

The Manic Street Preachers have recently unleashed their singles collection, "National Treasures" on an unsuspecting public and we've got three copies of it to hand out to our prize winners, just in time for Christmas. To be in with a chance, tell us what album "Motorcycle Emptiness" originally came from. Email your answer to competition@wbafc.co.uk

IN MEMORIAM

LES YATES

Les died peacefully on 17th Sept 2011. A lifelong Albion supporter and season ticket holder who throughout the 1960s was former chairman Jimmy Gaunt's chauffeur, and proud to have driven the Rolls with the number plate WBA 1. He leaves a son, Peter, who is still a season ticket holder, and grandsons who are also keen supporters of the club.



EDDIE INSON 1948-2011

Eddie Inson was a dedicated Albion supporter throughout his life. He will be sadly missed on the terraces at The Hawthorns following his recent death. Even through his unfortunate illness in the past few years, he was a Baggie Boy through and through. God bless you Eddie.



SAM TAYLOR

26TH SEP 1930 – 22ND OCT 2011

Sam passed away peacefully surrounded by his family. A lifelong and faithful Baggies supporter, he will be looking down and cheering you on! Sadly missed by all who knew him.



MICHAEL WILLIAM BALL

Lifelong Baggies supporter, he passed away on November 7th after a long illness, aged 71. Sadly missed by family and friends.

DAVID WITTENBERG

16TH JULY 1946 – 6TH NOVEMBER 2011

Lifelong Albion fan who will be fondly remembered by all that knew him. Now having a kickabout with Jeff Astle and Ronnie Allen.



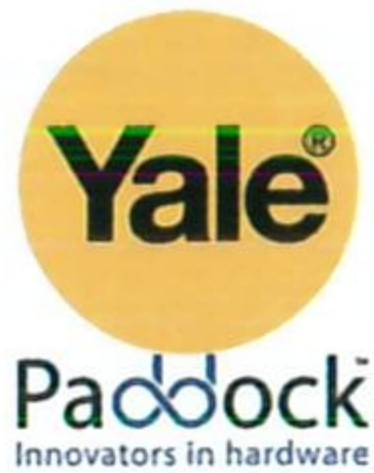
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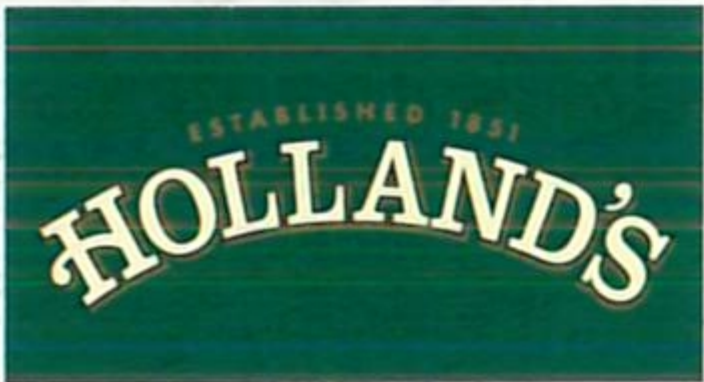
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MASCOT MAYHEM

Plenty of mascots with us today, starting with Callum Garman who is six and a big Shane Long fan. He reckons Albion will win 2-0 today. Bradley Evans turned 13 last Sunday – happy birthday! – and he thinks he'll be celebrating a 2-1 win today, hopefully with favourite player Chris Brunt involved.

Toby Greenway is five and he's also going for 2-1 to the Throstles today. Jerome Thomas is his favourite player. Toby's brother William is 11 and he's looking for a 2-0 win, perhaps with his top man Peter Odemwingie on the scoresheet.

Jack Sawle will be eight on Friday – happy birthday to you – and he also goes for a 2-1 Albion win. Shane Long is his top Baggie. Five year old Reece Robinson celebrates his birthday on Tuesday – congratulations Reece – and his favourite Albion man is also Peter Odemwingie. He fancies a 2-0 win today.

Jake Dunbavin is a Shane Long supporter and Jake reckons that we'll be enjoying a 2-1 victory this afternoon. Nataya Whitehead will be 11 on Monday – happy birthday Nataya – and showing the wisdom of age, she's decided to make no predictions about the score.

Finally, from Bolton, we have Eleanor Bancks, who also goes for a 2-1 scoreline, but in Bolton's favour. Her favourite Trotter is Gary Cahill.



Callum Garman Bradley Evans



Toby Greenway William Greenway



Jack Sawle Reece Robinson



Jake Dunbavin Nataya Whitehead



Eleanor Bancks

TOP OF THE WORLD!

Smethwick End season ticket holder Lucie Dedicoat went a bit further afield recently, spreading the Albion world in Dubai. Lucie, aged 10, is pictured at the top of the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa.



PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS:



Ken Taylor celebrated his 80th birthday on 15th November. He has been a season ticket holder at the Albion all his life and currently sits in the East Stand. Happy birthday from wife Pat, son Martin, Carole, Charley and Ross (pictured).

Happy 18th birthday Kieran and Thomas Mangan (pictured) on 17th November. WBA fans from day one. Lots of love from both families xxx



Wayne Cook, happy 50th birthday. Hope you are having a great day, all our love Wendy, Dean, Grace and Jake xxx

Happy 50th birthday Mom (pictured). Lots of love from all the family and friends xxx



Happy 60th birthday Mum with love from Stu, Sam and Gary. Have a fantastic day & hope WBA win for you!

Jason Butler, happy 40th birthday. You maybe over the hill but we love you still. Love Netta, Luca and Loris, boing! boing!



JUNIOR MEMBERS

FANCY DRESS

CHRISTMAS PARTY



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- + **COME AND SEE SANTA IN HIS IGLOO**
- + **MEET BAGGIE BIRD & ALBI**
- + **CHRISTMAS RAFFLE**
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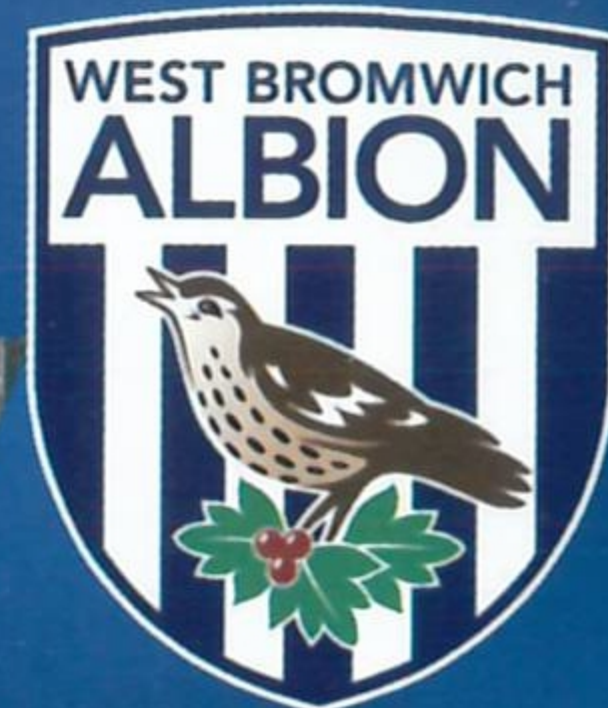
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* SUBJECT TO CHANGE



JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP 2011/12



**BABY
BAGGIES**

**ALBI'S
ARMY**

**STRIPES
4 LIFE**

HELLO TO ALL OF OUR JUNIOR MEMBERS
THIS AFTERNOON.

I am guessing you are all counting down the
sleeps until Christmas, not long now! But why not
visit Santa earlier though?

Your Christmas Party is on Thursday December
1st 2011, here at The Hawthorns from 6.30pm.
This year it is fancy dress and the Albion
players who are with us will judge the best
dressed entry.

You can enjoy fun, games, a disco and
refreshments and you can meet WBA players

including Peter Odemwingie*, and you can also
try your luck in our raffle which will have lots of
great prizes for you to win.

Not forgetting a visit from Baggie Bird, Albi and
of course a visit to Santa in his igloo. To book
your place, call 0871 271 9822 or email
jan.lockley@wbafc.co.uk

Don't forget to keep checking your Junior Zone
on the website too. There are competitions are
on their regularly for you to become one of our
official matchday mascots.

*Players subject to change





inspire to achieve

THE ALBION FOUNDATION



NATIONAL ANTI-BULLYING WEEK

The Albion Foundation is working in partnership with Sandwell Local Authority to support National Anti-Bullying week (14 – 18th November) in a whole host of ways.

We have produced a DVD featuring a variety of sports women and men, local young people and authority employees giving their support and advice regarding bullying and promoting bully-free schools and young people's provision.

Year 6 pupils from Moat Farm Junior School were trained through our 'Supporter to Reporter' programme during October half term and were lucky enough to be able to interview Jonas Olsson at West Bromwich Albion Football Club's media suite during a press conference.

Olsson's message to young people regarding bullying was, "Bullies are the ones that are insecure, the ones with issues about their self-confidence. If you're being bullied, start telling other people".

Amy Rippington, Captain of Sporting Club Albion Ladies Football Club said, "You've got to tell someone. Tell your parents, tell your teacher, tell anyone in your family, just tell anyone you can to get it out there, that you're unhappy and something needs to be done about it".

Brian Aldridge, Director at Sandwell Local Authority states that, "We understand that children and young people need to feel safe, they need to feel comfortable, if they're going to learn well and to succeed in life".

Also starring in the DVD are pupils currently referred to our Time-Out programme. Time-Out works with young people at risk of exclusion and

aims to reintegrate them back into school with a 93% success rate. As part of their learning programme they follow a PSHE course and this half term produced a short drama around the topic of bullying.

A Year 11 pupil at Oldbury College of Sport who attends the Edexcel programme 'Project' at The Albion Foundation also talks frankly of his experiences of bullying.

The DVD and accompanying promotional poster will be available to view and download at www.thealbionfoundation.co.uk and will be distributed to Sandwell schools.

Simultaneously, a competition was launched by Sandwell Local Authority which challenged children and young people to submit 'pledges' or 'promises' which would contribute to a bullying free ethos at their school or youth provision.

Twenty five winners join us today for a Match Day Experience and, following their tour of The Hawthorns and professional football coaching session, they are our guests at today's match. We hope you enjoy your experience.

The Albion Foundation is proud to partner Sandwell Local Authority in such a valuable, worthwhile campaign.

To find out more about this or any of the projects and programmes mentioned above please contact Allison Tripney, Education and Inclusion Manager at The Albion Foundation or by emailing Allison. tripney@albionfoundation.co.uk.

If you want to discuss issues around bullying confidentially, call Childline on 0800 1111.







TOM ROSS



nce a football hero always a football hero. That is something that most of the non football fraternity don't quite get. Once a man has worn the shirt for some time with pride and distinction, they are never forgotten by the supporters. There may be varying degrees of ability but they are all treated as special by the fans. But some make the transition from football hero to legend such as Tony "Bomber" Brown, Jeff Astle, Laurie Cunningham, Cyrille Regis, et al.

Despite ending his 20 year playing career in 1981 Bomber is still rightly revered as a genuine 100% legend. He is recovering from yet another major hip operation and is due to have another after Christmas but he has missed his beloved Baggies so much he is hobbling into The Hawthorns to get behind the microphone for today's game on the Goalzone today. I have to point out that Darren Carter was a superb deputy for Bomber. We have been inundated with "get better soon" messages from Baggies fans all over the world which we have passed on to Bomber. A true Baggies legend with an extraordinary relationship with The Hawthorns faithful. Welcome back Bomber.

Am I the only one who dislikes international break weekends when we have no top flight football? Why should the domestic programme be disrupted by FIFA/UEFA for a week of international friendlies? Most fans would prefer to be watching or listening to their own team play in a league or cup match. If a player misses a week or two of games he is deemed to be not match sharp and yet we have enforced breaks during the regular season. Why can't internationals be played midweek? Coming soon of course is the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations. This will mean lots of influential players leaving their clubs on or around January 14th and possibly not returning to play until February 19th. A month out of the season is a lot and could have a major bearing on who wins the Premier League or who wins promotion from the Championship and also who is relegated.

By the way, as well as the club's excellent social media sites on Twitter @wbafcofficial or search facebook for WBA.co.uk, you can talk all things Baggies with me on my social media sites. Just search facebook for The Goalzone with Tom Ross or on Twitter @thegoalzone.

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SERMON ON THE BONK



ood afternoon folks, here's a little curio to start with. You all know I love my Black Country and anything and everyone

associated with it (well most things anyway), thus it has always filled me with a sense of pride that the first goal scored at the Hawthorns in September 1900 came from the boot of a Black Countryman. Sadly it was not an Albion man, but the consolation comes in the fact that it was Cradley born Steve Bloomer one of the early giants of the game. Derby County took a point in a 1-1 draw. I never knew until recently that Steve's older brother Philip, also born in Cradley, also played for the Rams, albeit only one league game against Sheffield Wednesday at Derby in September 1895. Philip was a left-back and never had the talent or the good fortune of his younger sibling. In June 1896, Philip contracted peritonitis and died on the 5th of that month. Life is a fickle game. Whilst he went to an early grave, Steve went on to fame, fortune and immortality and is recognised as the greatest player of his generation.

Albion beat Redditch in the Birmingham Senior Cup the other week. It was a wild, wet and windy night at the Valley Stadium but we came out on top by four goals to one. We met up with an old face, Tommy Warmer, who was a Throstle reserve a few years ago. He now captains the Redditch side and was as pleased as punch to play against the team where he spent his formative footballing years. He is well thought of at Redditch and, indeed, he was a popular character here too. His night was ruined when he came off injured in the first half but he consoled himself with the chance to send his best wishes to the Albion and anyone who follows the reserves who might remember him. Job done Tom. And for those who need to know such

things, there was a programme and a team sheet. The reserves' unbeaten away run and unbeaten start to the season came to an end on November 7th when we lost to Swansea 1-0 (Leroy Lita, ohnonothimagen, scored the winner). We were much the better side in the second half and but for erratic finishing we could have won. The game saw another first however. Two years ago when we played the Swans in the FA Youth Cup, we played at a cricket ground. This time, the reserve game was at a rugby ground, the Parc Y Scarlet, Llanelli, to be precise, home of the Llanelli Scarlets. So if you didn't go, all you Throstle groundhoppers may have missed your chance to add it to your list, look you!

Good to see that the Poppies debate was sorted out although I understand that we had some stick from Talksport because our shirts didn't display poppies at the Arsenal match. They should have done their homework because you and I know that we wore them at the Liverpool home game. Having said all that, I think England should have been allowed to wear the poppy on their shirts. FIFA should leave well alone and perhaps concentrate on legislation concerning straight bananas or whatever (only a joke chaps, only a joke!)

It's FA Youth Cup time again and I see we have drawn Barnsley at home. A home tie is a rarity in itself so it will be good to see the boys on their home turf. We have some promising youngsters so you should come along and support them. This will be the first time that we have faced the Tykes in this competition so perhaps we can exact a little revenge because a hundred years ago, in 1911-12 they beat us 1-0 in the FA Cup Final replay at Sheffield. I suppose you will accuse me of taking things to the extreme, but football fans, especially historians, have long memories (and yes, I am still

trying to find the resting place of Jesse Pennington).

Craig Dawson is doing well for the England U21 side. He scored his fourth goal in five games when he netted against Iceland at Colchester in a 5-0 win on November 10th. This is a tremendous record, keep it up Craig. And well done too to the Republic of Ireland who have almost certainly qualified for next year's European Championships something that Shane Long and Simon Cox can look forward to with relish.

Bolton always seem to score goals here at the Albion so here is a little meaty stat for all you Throstles out there. On September 22nd 1962 Albion won 5-4 against Bolton at the Hawthorns. Derek Kevan scored three for the Throstles and Francis Lee netted a treble including two penalties (typical) for the Trotters. Wyn Davies was Bolton's other scorer whilst Ken Foggo and Don Howe (pen) were the other men on the scoresheet for Albion. This was the last time to date that a player from each side netted a hat-trick in a league game at the Hawthorns. As an aside, it has only happened in an Albion league game once since then. When? Answer in my next column.

Finally, younger readers may have heard the one and only Cyrille Regis referred to as "Smokin' Joe". This moniker was given to him by Ron Atkinson who compared Cyrille to the great world heavyweight boxing champion "Smokin' Joe" Frazier. He was the first man to take the World Heavyweight title from Muhammad Ali at Madison Square Garden in 1971. Joe died from liver cancer on November 7th. Believe it or not, when Joe retired from boxing he toured the world as a speaker and singer visiting Old Hill at one stage - I did say the World. He played no less a venue than the Regis Hall in Old Hill where he actually sang a couple of numbers! You couldn't make it up could you? Or could you? Keep out th' oss road. John Homer

PILGRIMS PROGRESS

BAGGIES TRAVEL



Lightning doesn't strike twice as we were unable to repeat last season's brilliant 3-2 win at the Emirates with another triumph two weeks ago, this time going down 3-0 to the in form Gunners. It's another fortnight until our next away fixture, when we head to London to take on Queens Park Rangers at Loftus Road. We won the Championship in Shepherd's Bush on the final day of the 2007/2008 season, winning 2-0 on the day, courtesy of goals from Kim do-Heon and current skipper Chris Brunt. On our last visit to the stadium we lost 3-1 in March 2010, which was Neil Warnock's first match as manager of the Rs. Chris Brunt scored again. Amazingly that was our last defeat in the Championship, as we remained unbeaten in our last 12 league games (8 wins, 4 draws). Let's hope that remains the case for a long time to come! Travel details can be found at the foot of the page for the trip on December 3rd.

As tickets go on sale to Away Season Ticket Holders from this coming Monday for the pre-Christmas games at Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle United, the times and prices to Ewood Park and whatever the Magpies ground is called this week can also be found below, but please note that the QPR trip is the last away match where concession travel prices will be available. Travel information for the clash at White Hart Lane early next year will, ironically, be included in next week's

programme against Tottenham Hotspur. This fixture is now on Tuesday 3rd January with a 7.45pm kick off.

At this point I would like to welcome Leons Coaches to today's match with Bolton. Their group will be led by Robert & Andy Douglas and I trust Andy will be supporting the Baggies this time, unlike the last time he attended the Hawthorns on the opening day of the season! Leons have once again provided us with excellent coaches to the away matches this season. Long may it continue.

See you on the coaches.
Dave.

SUPPORTERS CLUB DIARY

MAIN BRANCH PLAYERS MEETING

Our next players meeting is on Thursday 24th November in the East Stand. Our guests are Nickey Shorey, Shane Long and Romaine Sawyers, 6.30pm for a 7.00pm start, bar available. Members only but new members can join on the night. Be there or be square.

MAIN BRANCH CHRISTMAS MEAL

We have decided to have a Christmas Dinner before the Wigan home game on the 10th December in the Richardson Suite. Sit down at 1pm and finish at 2.40pm after which you return to your own seats for the match. Price for the meal only is £28 for members and £30 for non members. For bookings and further information ring the Secretary Alan Cleverley on 0121 551 6439. Please book early as places will be limited. Please note, the Former Players' Association's AGM, scheduled for that date, has now been postponed until the new year, which means we shall be inviting some of the former players to our dinner. Please watch the website for full details. The supporters' club section of the Richardson Suite for the Wigan game will only be available for those members attending our Christmas dinner. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

SUTTON COLDFIELD BRANCH

Their next meeting is on Tuesday the 29th November at the Royal Hotel, High Street, Sutton Coldfield. Their guest is the man from the radio, the one and only Daz Hale. 8pm start, free buffet, bar available. Members only new members can join on the night.

Keep out the road
John Homer
Chairman WBASC

Sat 3rd Dec @ 3pm
QUEENS PARK RANGERS v ALBION
Coaches depart:
Kidderminster 9.00am,
Stourbridge 9.15am,
West Bromwich 10.00am.
Price: £19.00 adults
(£17.00 concessions)

Sat 3rd Dec @ 3pm
BLACKBURN ROVERS v ALBION
Coaches depart:
Kidderminster 10.00am,
Stourbridge 10.15am,
West Bromwich 11.00am.
Price: £17.00
(NO CONCESSIONS)

Wed 21st Dec @ 7.45pm
NEWCASTLE UNITED v ALBION
Coaches depart:
Kidderminster 1.00pm,
Stourbridge 1.15pm,
West Bromwich 2.00pm.
Price: £22.00
(NO CONCESSIONS)

BOOKING DETAILS:
Call 0871 271 9780 for credit card bookings or book at the Ticket Office during normal hours. Bookings can be made the night before departure (subject to availability) by ringing Dave Holloway on 07887 928083.



34

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DELIVER THE CHILDREN



In the previous issue of "The Book Of Albion", we discussed David Oldfield's new role at the club as the Development Coach, and just what that entails as he looks to prepare our clutch of 18 to 21 year olds for the step up to first team football.

Once upon a time, the pathway was pretty straightforward. You joined the club as a schoolboy perhaps, played in the younger age levels, headed off into the reserve team and from there, the first XI, all the while working within a squad that changed only slightly year on year. As a result, you could see what you were aiming for and who you were trying to replace. The modern game, with the influx of money, the ability to scout the world rather than the UK, and the increasingly hysterical demands for instant gratification have basically smashed that pathway to pieces.

"It's undeniable that the changes to football in this country, most notably the ability to bring in players from all around the world, means that it's harder for young players to break into top teams," agrees David. "I have mixed feelings on that. It's a world game, that's the way it is and the young players we produce simply have to be good enough to get in the team. I'm not one who thinks there should be a quota, though I do think the rules that cover the number of home grown players in the overall squad are important. It's about quality

at the end of it and we must produce good enough footballers so that they demand a place in the team. Supporters pay a lot of money, and they want to see good players, irrespective of where they're from or how you got them.

"The seven substitute rule is an interesting one in that

**THE ABILITY TO BRING
IN PLAYERS FROM ALL
AROUND THE WORLD,
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IT'S HARDER FOR
YOUNG PLAYERS
TO BREAK INTO
TOP TEAMS**

respect. It means clubs tend to run with bigger squads of senior players than in the past which can make it difficult, but at the same time, it gives extra places on matchdays and can give the boys a bit more exposure. The Football League has gone back to five, and there are clubs who preferred it as it was for just that reason. You get a young boy on the bench and suddenly there are a couple of injuries in that specific position, he's playing and getting his opportunity and then it's all down to whether he grasps it or not. Ironically, it might be better if it was seven in the lower leagues and five in

the Premier League in terms of young player development".

Along with the increase in the intensity of competition for places, the structure of football away from the first team has changed too. Reserve football has been very much the poor relation for a while, but with more and more clubs producing development squads like our own, it's a level of the game that is fighting back according to Oldfield.

"The days of the reserves mirroring the first team fixtures and playing 40 games a season have gone and in the past there was a bit of a danger that the reserves were overlooked. But I don't think that's the case now, the reserves have an identity to them. The sides are much younger than they used to be. When I was growing up at Luton, the reserve team tended to be very strong, full of pros who couldn't get in the first team, we played on a Saturday like the first team, and if you were in the reserves, you'd done well. It's different now, much younger, and it's seen as a stepping stone for those players.

"It's important the players treat it that way. The boys are watched very carefully in reserve football, we have analysis work done on them, they get specific feedback with video clips to watch, very similar to the first team and it's fantastic that the club have committed to that process, so we are giving the boys every opportunity to learn and progress".

Equally, Premier League clubs in particular are utilising

the loan market extensively to give young players experience on matchdays, though that has its drawbacks too.

"The loan market is becoming so important. We've seen James Hurst go to Blackpool, Chris Wood is doing exceptionally well at Birmingham, Saido Berahino has gone to Northampton and I dare say there will be more. There are certainly merits in keeping bodies around us, keeping the group together, working with them everyday, sometimes along with the gaffer in his sessions. If he is happy to take players into his work, that's fantastic for us. Putting them in front of him is very important and the boys do have to recognise that every single training session is vital, because even if they think they're not, they are being watched and assessed all the time. But letting them go out and experience football where the result is everything, coming up against fully grown men who are chasing league points, the competitive edge that goes with playing in front of crowds, handling that pressure, that is a big part of development.

"When boys do go on loan, it can make coaching sessions more awkward because you don't have the numbers. Already I've had sessions with two and three players because of various demands from elsewhere, other times we've got 13 and 14, that's just how it is. Just as I might lose players to loans or because they go and work with the gaffer, I can call on lads from Jimmy Shan's group if we feel they warrant the step up, so it's swings and roundabouts. But with the right approach, you can get a lot done, smaller groups can concentrate on very specific ideas, you can maintain a very intense focus that can be very beneficial, so there are plenty of ways to skin a cat.

"It has been an interesting start to my time here, I've learnt a lot, the boys have responded well. Although it's not the be all and end all, the results in the reserves have been very good. Results do matter more in the reserves than the youth team, you can't be getting beaten all the time, so you're sharpening up the mentality in that sense, but at the same time, we realise

the club won't be in crisis if you lose six reserve games in a row. We don't specifically prepare for games very often because that's not always possible because of the other demands in training. You don't always have the team together before a game the way you do with the first team on a Thursday and Friday for example.

"What's pleased me is that the lads have been responsive, they've worked hard. They've bought into the idea of the specific middle group, the development group, and that's important. It's all about improving, about realising potential, getting the maximum out of their abilities, achieving what they should do in the game, working hard enough to get there. Having the right mentality, the strength and character to do well, that is the big issue in football and especially with a development group. Where are we going, how do we get there, and focusing the mind on that. So far, so good, but it has to continue. Good starts are no good if you fade away afterwards, you have to maintain the level".



RESERVE AND YOUTH

BARCLAYS PREMIER RESERVE LEAGUE - SOUTHERN GROUP

Home matches in BOLD CAPITALS

DATE / OPPOSITION / RESULT

STARTING ELEVEN

TUE AUG 16	EVERTON (TRAINING GROUND, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS) (KO 1PM)	2-2	Fulop	Jones	McAuley	Ibanez	Mattock
TUE SEP 6	NORWICH CITY (KO 4PM)	4-2	L Daniels	Atkinson	Downing	O'Neil	D Daniels
WED SEP 14	WIGAN ATHLETIC (KO 2PM)	2-0	Fulop	Jones	Downing	O'Neil	Mattock
TUE SEP 20	STUDLEY (BIRMINGHAM SENIOR CUP) (KO 7.45PM)	5-0	Lewis	Gayle	Downing	D Daniels	Garmston
TUE SEP 27	SUNDERLAND (TRAINING GROUND, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS) (KO 2PM)	3-0	L Daniels	Gayle	Downing	O'Neil	Dawson
TUE OCT 4	WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS (KO 7PM)	1-0	L Daniels	Hurst	Downing	D Daniels	Gayle
TUE OCT 18	ARSENAL (KO 7PM)	3-1	L Daniels	Hurst	Downing	O'Neil	Mattock
TUE OCT 25	REDDITCH UNITED (BIRMINGHAM SENIOR CUP 2) (KO 7.45PM)	4-1	Lewis	Hurst ¹	Downing	D Daniels	Gayle
TUE NOV 1	CHELSEA (KO 7PM)	4-0	Fulop	Hurst	Tamas	Dawson ¹	Shorey
MON NOV 7	SWANSEA CITY (KO 7PM)	0-1					
TUE NOV 15	ASTON VILLA (KO 7PM)	0-3					
TUE DEC 6	FULHAM (KO 2PM)						
TUE DEC 13	WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS (KO 7PM)						
MON JAN 9	CHELSEA (KO 2PM)						
TUE JAN 17	NEWCASTLE UNITED (KO 7PM)						
TUE JAN 24	SWANSEA CITY (TRAINING GROUND, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS) (KO 1PM)						
TUE FEB 14	NORWICH CITY (TRAINING GROUND, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS) (KO 2PM)						
MON FEB 20	ASTON VILLA (KO 7PM)						
TUE FEB 28	FULHAM (TRAINING GROUND, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS) (KO 2PM)						
TUE MAR 6	MANCHESTER UNITED (KO 7PM)						
MON MAR 12	ARSENAL (KO 7PM)						
TUE MAR 20	BOLTON WANDERERS (KO 7PM)						
TUE APR 3	BLACKBURN ROVERS (TRAINING GROUND, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS) (KO 1PM)						
TUE APR 10	LIVERPOOL (KO 2PM)						

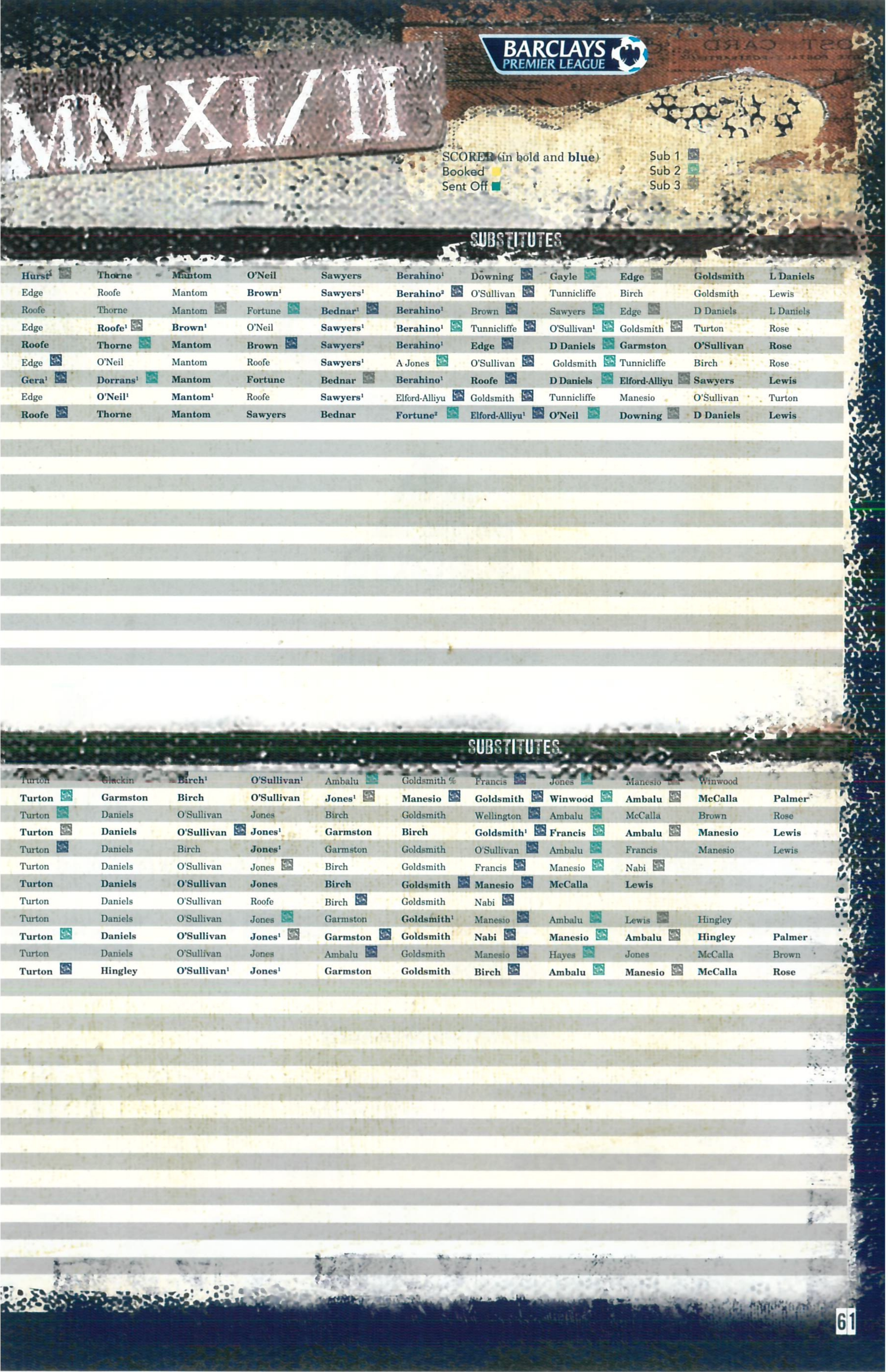
PREMIER LEAGUE ACADEMY LEAGUE - UNDER 18s - GROUP C

Home matches in BOLD CAPITALS

DATE / OPPOSITION / RESULT

STARTING ELEVEN

SAT AUG 20	FULHAM (LONG DISTANCE)	3-7	Lewis	Atkinson	Gayle	Garmston	Tunnicliffe
SAT AUG 27	WATFORD (LONG DISTANCE)	1-2	Lewis	Atkinson	Francis	Edge	Tunnicliffe
SAT SEP 3	NEWCASTLE UNITED (INTER)	1-2	Lewis	Atkinson ¹	Francis	Edge	Tunnicliffe
SAT SEP 10	NOTTINGHAM FOREST (INTER)	2-1	Rose	Atkinson	Wellington	Edge	Tunnicliffe
SAT SEP 17	SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (INTER)	1-4	Rose	Atkinson	Wellington	Edge	Tunnicliffe
SAT SEP 24	STOKE CITY	1-0	Rose	Atkinson ¹	Wellington	Garmston	Tunnicliffe
SAT OCT 1	EVERTON	0-4	Rose	Atkinson	Francis	Garmston	Tunnicliffe
SAT OCT 8	MANCHESTER CITY	0-0	Rose	Atkinson	Francis	Wellington	Tunnicliffe
SAT OCT 15	BOLTON WANDERERS	1-0	Rose	Atkinson	Francis	Wellington	Tunnicliffe
SAT OCT 29	LIVERPOOL	1-2	Lewis	Atkinson	Francis	Edge	Tunnicliffe
SAT NOV 5	WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS	0-3	Palmer	Atkinson	Francis	Garmston	Tunnicliffe
SAT NOV 12	CREWE ALEXANDRA	2-4	Lewis	Atkinson	Francis	Wellington	Tunnicliffe
SAT NOV 19	MANCHESTER UNITED						
TUE NOV 29	BARNSELY (FAYC 3)						
SAT DEC 3	BLACKBURN ROVERS						
SAT DEC 10	BOLTON WANDERERS						
SAT DEC 17	LIVERPOOL						
SAT JAN 7	WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS						
SAT JAN 14	CREWE ALEXANDRA						
SAT JAN 21	MANCHESTER UNITED						
SAT JAN 28	BLACKBURN ROVERS						
SAT FEB 11	STOKE CITY						
SAT FEB 18	EVERTON						
SAT FEB 25	MANCHESTER CITY						
SAT MAR 3	HUDDERSFIELD TOWN (INTER)						
SAT MAR 10	MIDDLESBROUGH (INTER)						
SAT MAR 17	DERBY COUNTY (INTER)						
SAT MAR 31	SHEFFIELD UNITED (INTER)						
SAT APR 21	BARNSELY (INTER)						



XXIV

SCORER (in bold and blue)
Booked
Sent Off

Sub 1
Sub 2
Sub 3

SUBSTITUTES

Hurst	Thorne	Mantom	O'Neil	Sawyers	Berahino ¹	Downing	Gayle	Edge	Goldsmith	L Daniels
Edge	Roofe	Mantom	Brown ¹	Sawyers ¹	Berahino ²	O'Sullivan	Tunncliffe	Birch	Goldsmith	Lewis
Roofe	Thorne	Mantom	Fortune	Bednar ¹	Berahino ¹	Brown	Sawyers	Edge	D Daniels	L Daniels
Edge	Roofe ¹	Brown ¹	O'Neil	Sawyers ¹	Berahino ¹	Tunncliffe	O'Sullivan ¹	Goldsmith	Turton	Rose
Roofe	Thorne	Mantom	Brown	Sawyers ²	Berahino ¹	Edge	D Daniels	Garmston	O'Sullivan	Rose
Edge	O'Neil	Mantom	Roofe	Sawyers ¹	A Jones	O'Sullivan	Goldsmith	Tunncliffe	Birch	Rose
Gera ¹	Dorrans ¹	Mantom	Fortune	Bednar	Berahino ¹	Roofe	D Daniels	Elford-Alliyu	Sawyers	Lewis
Edge	O'Neil ¹	Mantom ¹	Roofe	Sawyers ¹	Elford-Alliyu	Goldsmith	Tunncliffe	Manesio	O'Sullivan	Turton
Roofe	Thorne	Mantom	Sawyers	Bednar	Fortune ²	Elford-Alliyu ¹	O'Neil	Downing	D Daniels	Lewis

SUBSTITUTES

Turton	Glackin	Birch ¹	O'Sullivan ¹	Ambalu	Goldsmith %	Francis	Jones	Manesio	Winwood	
Turton	Garmston	Birch	O'Sullivan	Jones ¹	Manesio	Goldsmith	Winwood	Ambalu	McCalla	Palmer
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones	Birch	Goldsmith	Wellington	Ambalu	McCalla	Brown	Rose
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones ¹	Garmston	Birch	Goldsmith ¹	Francis	Ambalu	Manesio	Lewis
Turton	Daniels	Birch	Jones ¹	Garmston	Goldsmith	O'Sullivan	Ambalu	Francis	Manesio	Lewis
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones	Birch	Goldsmith	Francis	Manesio	Nabi		
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones	Birch	Goldsmith	Manesio	McCalla	Lewis		
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Roofe	Birch	Goldsmith	Nabi				
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones	Garmston	Goldsmith ¹	Manesio	Ambalu	Lewis	Hingley	
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones ¹	Garmston	Goldsmith	Nabi	Manesio	Ambalu	Hingley	Palmer
Turton	Daniels	O'Sullivan	Jones	Ambalu	Goldsmith	Manesio	Hayes	Jones	McCalla	Brown
Turton	Hingley	O'Sullivan ¹	Jones ¹	Garmston	Goldsmith	Birch	Ambalu	Manesio	McCalla	Rose

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RICHARD



Obviously this game is always a little bit special to me as they're the two teams that I played a lot of games for. Albion became my real home because I was here for so long, but Bolton gave me my break in English football and I had some great times with them so they're close to my heart as well.

Funnily enough, in the staff office at Hereford the other day we were reminiscing about the old Burnden Park because I played there and our director of football, Gary Peters, played there for a few different opposition teams. There was a little ditch by the side of the pitch and Gary was talking about how he'd always kick the left winger into it – that was how he knew if he'd had a good game! It was quite a steep drop there and we had little David Lee on the wing when I played. If he had to go and fetch the ball from the ditch, he'd disappear from view from the other side! I don't know if the ditch was so deep or he was so small!

The pitch was like a sponge it would just absorb any amount of water and it could be hard to play on at times, but I've only got good memories. To come into English football, get promoted, go and play in the League Cup Final at Wembley against Liverpool, that will stick with me forever. But saying that, I might easily have not ended up going there because my first game when I was on trial with them didn't go great!

I had been on loan in Switzerland, at FC Locarno, I scored 13 goals in 26 games and I was looking to stay in the country, maybe at a bigger team, but my Dutch club, Fortuna Sittard, gave me another year's contract and so we moved back to Holland. Three days later, my agent rang to tell me there were three Swiss clubs after me, but after moving back, I couldn't face packing up and going back where I'd come from! I started training but then got another call to tell me there was a club in England and one in Spain that wanted me. Easy decision

– I'll go to Spain! But my agent persuaded me to go to Bolton, he said it was all organised.

I joined them for their pre-season in Scotland, based in Dingwall, up past Inverness. On the way up, we played Dunfermline and I think I had three touches the whole game. The ball just went flying past, one end to the other, and I just thought, "What the hell I have come to!" Their chief scout was Dixie McNeill and he came to me and said, "Richard, we think you're a good player, but you need to show more or we won't be able to take you". We played Ross County in Dingwall, I scored a couple, we won 5-0, then we played Inverness Caledonian Thistle and scored again and they made an offer for me, £200,000.

Although the coach wanted to keep me, Fortuna were happy as Larry because they thought they wouldn't get anything so they put a big ribbon round me and packed me off to England! It was funny, lots of people in Holland were saying they couldn't understand how I could go to England, that I wasn't an English type player and I'd be back in three months. Sixteen years later and I am still here, and coaching in League Two now!

Having both clubs in the top division is great for me and I love to see both doing well, so hopefully both can climb away from the danger zone in the next few weeks up to Christmas and take the pressure of a little bit for the second half of the season. This should be a really close game this afternoon, especially as Bolton picked up a bit with the great win over Stoke just before the break. Albion's home form which was so good last season hasn't been quite as strong this year, though they have had Manchester United and Liverpool here already which has made it tougher. They've got a good run of games coming up to Christmas now where they have a great chance to get a lot of points against teams like Wigan, QPR and Blackburn, not easy games, but the ones where you want to get something. That's the same story this afternoon as well.

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VOICE IN THE

CARD CARRYING CONSISTENCY



It isn't often that we can hand out large chunks of praise to a referee, so let's not be shy of doing so when the opportunity arises.

The subject of our praise is the unfortunately monikered Darren Deadman, particularly so in the circumstances. You'll doubtless be familiar with the circumstances of the last few weeks, where he officiated at Doncaster Rovers' game with Middlesbrough, a fixture which took place in the aftermath of the sad death of Rovers striker Billy Sharp's young son.

Sharp was brave enough to play in the game, good enough to score a goal, and, having done so, raised his shirt to expose another beneath, carrying a message in tribute to his lost son. The laws, rules, regulations, call them what you will, required referee Deadman to dispense a yellow card in Sharp's direction for raising his shirt over his head.

The referee was man enough and bright enough to ignore that requirement, doing what any right thinking person would do and turned a blind eye to Sharp's tribute, perhaps also reasoning that he'd be lynched on the way out of the ground if he had booked him. But seriously, let's not do down Deadman for doing what was right rather than what was required of him by the rule book. Sharp paid tribute, it will have meant a great deal to him and his family, and the game as a whole was enhanced by it.

The Sharp situation is, thankfully, a rare one, but it does give pause to think about whether the rules over celebrating goals and the card thereby issued makes sense. After all, scoring goals is the point of the game isn't it? Why should we make such a

song and dance about a player taking off his shirt in the throes of ecstasy? After all, it's the one time they can do it without ending up in the newspapers...

In fairness to the authorities they are caught between a rock and a hard place for while one week the call will go up for more common sense, the next there will be clarion calls for greater consistency. FIFA have insisted that bare chested celebrations are not to be tolerated given that it upsets the sensibilities of religious groups. That's right and proper, so there are no arguments about that one. But displaying a t-shirt or a message? That's altogether tougher to call. The FIFA stipulation is that players should not wear a shirt showing a religious, political or offensive slogan, which is where the furore over England's poppies for the game against Spain came from at the start of November.

Now let's note that in recent high profile cases, Mario Balotelli and Paul Scharner were booked for raising their match shirt over their heads, not for what was revealed beneath. But in its own way, does that not just make life more complicated? For if either had rolled up their shirt and tucked it under their chin, revealing the shirt beneath, the mandatory booking would have been escaped. Then it would be up to the referee to decide whether the slogan or image was political, religious or offensive. Good luck with that one.

In those circumstances, should Mario Balotelli have been carded for revealing his "Why Is It Always Me" shirt after scoring at Old Trafford? Or Paul Scharner for revealing a bigger version of the Albion crest on a t-shirt after getting a goal at Villa Park, the same crest that he wears on

his playing shirt of course – a religious icon if ever there was one? The decision must surely be based on whether the celebration is liable to incite the crowd? But at that point, you instantly move from a hard and fast rule to applying your judgement as a referee. Balotelli's shirt was quite funny, pretty harmless, so would it have been punished if displayed at Craven Cottage? Possibly not. But was it given a different context by him wearing it at Old Trafford? The same is true of Scharner – no big deal at Blackburn perhaps, but at the home of your closest rivals?

And what if the message scrawled on the shirt might upset opposition supporters? The infamous anti-Aston Villa shirt worn by Birmingham's Paul Tait at Wembley in 1995 and revealed after he scored the "Golden Goal" in the Auto Windscreens Shield final left nothing to the imagination, but others might be a little more subtle and lost on referees not versed in the history between the competing clubs. Left to common sense, a ref might not caution a player who has really pushed the boat out. And that's not even touching the surface of anything written in one of the bewildering array of languages spoken by Premier League footballers, impenetrable to most officials but possibly causing a storm in Catalonia, Hungary or France.

The irony is that as we call for common sense rather than strict adherence to a rule, the area where common sense is used sees all too many players getting off scot free when celebrating fully clad. How often do we see a goalscorer peel away to celebrate by cupping his hand to his ear as he runs in front of the opposition supporters

WILDERNESS



suddenly silenced by his goal? And how often is a card administered? Very rarely. Often it's only when, like Emmanuel Adebayor in the Manchester City v Arsenal game last term, they've run the length of the field to celebrate in front of the opposition supporters. But which is more offensive to you? Paul Scharner celebrating in front of his own supporters at Villa Park by revealing the club crest or any one of a hundred celebrants effectively signalling "You're not

singing any more" to thousands of opposition fans?

Or, frankly, is any of it really that offensive? Shouldn't we all be a little more grown up about it, including we supporters? Should we really get so het up about the opposition number nine enjoying his goal in front of us? Should we really be frothing at the mouth and reaching desperately for the 606 phoneline to have a word with Lord Chief Justice Savage about how terrible it is given that, if the tables are turned and it's

our centre-forward rubbing the opposition's noses in it, we enjoy the goal that little bit more?

Never mind asking referees to have a bit of common sense, it wouldn't hurt if the rest of us showed a little bit as well. Then the card issue might just disappear.

throistle

TO BUILD A NEW JERUSALEM



TEAM

Back Row: Gerry Summers (coach), Derek Monaghan, Barry Cowdrill, Martyn Bennett, Martin Jol, Mark Grew, Kevin Summerfield, Ally Brown, Cyrille Regis, Brendon Batson, Alistair Robertson, Ronnie Allen (manager).
Front Row: Nicky Cross, David Arthur, Steve Mackenzie, John Wile, Gary Owen, Derek Statham, Clive Whitehead, John Deehan.



t could have been all so glorious, the 1981/82 season, it could have seen us carry off an unprecedented double and end a 14 year search for silverware. As it was, it was the season when we crossed the Rubicon, when we made it clear that our flirtation with title chasing that had begun in 1978 and endured until 1981, was well and truly over and that we could not compete with the likes of Liverpool, Nottingham Forest, that year's European champions Aston Villa and Manchester United.

It was 'Manchester United who brought that point home to us with a string of hammer blows that essentially decimated the core of the team and, by extension, the club, for without football, we are meaningless. Ron Atkinson had been poached – possibly scrambled or hard boiled too – by United in the summer, replacing Dave Sexton at the helm and it was no shock when he instantly turned his attention to taking the brilliance of Bryan Robson with him. It was a protracted saga that wasn't finally completed until an off kilter Albion had been knocked out of Europe at the first hurdle by Grasshoppers Zurich. We have not troubled our continental neighbours again since.

Robson disappeared for a British record fee, Remi Moses going with him, and new manager Ronnie Allen, in charge for the second time after his brief stint in 1978, was left to pick up and reassemble the pieces.

Central to those plans was the recruitment of powerful – and by powerful, we mean lethal – Dutch midfielder Martin Jol who believed in tackling first and asking questions later, though he wasn't that bothered with the questions either. Jol swiftly slotted into the midfield, so it was a terrible blow to lose him to injury halfway into a campaign where his presence had helped the Throstles recover from the most sluggish of starts.

He'd also helped Albion enjoy a thrilling League Cup run, despatching Shrewsbury over two legs, 5-4 on aggregate, West Ham in a second replay at Upton Park, Crystal Palace down at Selhurst Park and then Aston Villa, courtesy of a Derek Statham goal in Witton. That set us up for a first League Cup semi-final in 12 years, a two legged affair against Tottenham Hotspur, the first game at The Hawthorns. For all their reputation as a flair team, Spurs arrived at The Hawthorns in grinding mode, Keith Burkinshaw's team escaping back to the capital with a 0-0 draw in a game where Jol and

Spurs' Tony Galvin were sent off, an advantage they exploited by winning 1-0 at White Hart Lane through a Hazard goal.

We played that game on February 10th but we got over the disappointment three days later by winning a fifth round FA Cup tie at home to Norwich, Cyrille blazing in the BBC's Goal of the Season, quintessential Regis, pace, power, comic book stuff. It was appropriate he got the BBC accolade for, with Jol absent for the rest of the season, the job of keeping Albion afloat landed squarely on his broad shoulders. Ordered not to waste energy by going back across the halfway line by his manager – and we've had a few who've ordered their strikers not to cross it in the opposite direction at times – Regis was the Albion talisman in a season where the fixtures just piled up and up – we played 58 senior games by the time it was over, the last 22 of them inside 75 days. What do you make of that Arsene?

A 2-0 sixth round win over Coventry at The Hawthorns – Regis and Gary Owen – put us

into a second semi against Second Division Queens Park Rangers, Wembley beckoning surely? We were 16th in the First Division at the time, not great but not scary either at the time, but concentration went out the window, just as it did at Highbury in the semi. One of the worst games of football ever played was settled by an accident, an Ally Robertson clearance hitting Clive Allen and flying in.

We went to pieces, seven straight league defeats ended only by beating Wolves at Molineux. They went down but as we came to the penultimate game, we might have joined them. Leeds United were a point above us, playing their last match. Winner would almost certainly take all. Mackenzie and Regis – his 25th goal of the season – gave us a 2-0 win and the Leeds fan went on the rampage, smashing down the Smethwick End wall in an effort to get the game abandoned. It wasn't and, by way of thanks, we promptly lost 3-0 at Stoke City 48 hours later to ensure the Potter's stayed up. At Leeds' expense. Instant karma, it'll always get you.

	TEAM	PLD	W	D	L	F	A	GA	PTS
1	Liverpool	42	26	9	7	80	32	+48	87
2	Ipswich Town	42	26	5	11	75	53	+22	83
3	Manchester United	42	22	12	8	59	29	+30	78
4	Tottenham Hotspur	42	20	11	11	67	48	+19	71
5	Arsenal	42	20	11	11	48	37	+11	71
6	Swansea City	42	21	6	15	58	51	+7	69
7	Southampton	42	19	9	14	72	67	+5	66
8	Everton	42	17	13	12	56	50	+6	64
9	West Ham United	42	14	16	12	66	57	+9	58
10	Manchester City	42	15	13	14	49	50	-1	58
11	Aston Villa	42	15	12	15	55	53	+2	57
12	Nottingham Forest	42	15	12	15	42	48	-6	57
13	Brighton & Hove Albion	42	13	13	16	43	52	-9	52
14	Coventry City	42	13	11	18	56	62	-6	50
15	Notts County	42	13	8	21	61	69	-8	47
16	Birmingham City	42	10	14	18	53	61	-8	44
17	ALBION	42	11	11	20	46	57	-11	44
18	Stoke City	42	12	8	22	44	63	-19	44
19	Sunderland	42	11	11	20	38	58	-20	44
20	Leeds United	42	10	12	20	39	61	-22	42
21	Wolverhampton Wanderers	42	10	10	22	32	63	-31	40
22	Middlesbrough	42	8	15	19	34	52	-18	39

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LEADERS OF THE FAITH



When Archie Macaulay tendered his resignation at the start of April 1963, it unleashed a tumultuous train of events that was to change the face of the football club. The club had been drifting since the late 1950s and the departure of Vic Buckingham as manager and a feeling was abroad that something had to be done to arrest the slide. But what?

At a board meeting on 9th April, the something came for, the meeting about to break up, the Chairman, Major Wilson Keys made a statement to the rest of the directors. The minutes record that, "He said that he had already intimated to the Board that he would retire from the chair at the end of the present season. In view of the changes now forced on us by the unexpected resignation of the manager Mr A R Macaulay, he felt it would be wise for the new Board to be constituted at once so that a new manager would not be faced with an early change of Chairman. After some discussion, Major Wilson Keys' retirement from the position of Chairman was accepted with regret".

The departure of the Major ended his 16 year reign and set Albion off on a new era. When the directors sat again, nine days later, Jim Gaunt was in the role of Chairman of the Board. Albion had moved on and, within

a few minutes, the directors were to ratify an appointment that would usher in a radically new era, an era where the team manager would be responsible for team affairs, most notably the selection of the team, a duty that had hitherto been discharged by the board. As the minutes noted, "The Board confirmed the appointment of Mr James Hagan as manager at a salary of £3,000, the use of a car, and payment of

**AS GOOD A
JUDGE AS
BILL SHANKLY
RECKONED HIM
TO BE ONE OF
THE FINEST
PLAYERS OF
ALL TIME**

removal expenses." A tracksuit allowance wasn't required.

That last remark sums up the tragedy of the Hagan era at The Hawthorns. We are all reduced to shorthand, to caricature when people look to describe us to others, but with Hagan, the memory of him is a particularly corrosive one, all about the tracksuit revolt, about nearly drowning in the cut at Spring Road, about losing to QPR in the League Cup Final after giving his players, 2-0 up

at half-time, what we these days call the hairdryer treatment.

Certainly all these things took place, and certainly his irascible temperament made him plenty of enemies within the Albion dressing room of the day. Plenty of senior players of the Hagan era will testify to the fact there were times when they could have probably cheerfully killed him, eight of them penned transfer requests in the wake of his first pre-season in the summer of 1963 and it is undeniable that his manner on the training ground left plenty to be desired, as Kenny Foggo outlines elsewhere in this issue. At the same time, Tony Brown and a number of others owe their Albion careers to him and are rather more forgiving of his foibles. As ever in life, it's mostly shades of grey – beware the man who tells you it's all black and white, for that is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

And Hagan was nobody's fool. The County Durham born inside-forward lost a great chunk of his playing career to World War 2, 21 when it began, 27 when it ended. Even so, Hagan totted up well over 350 league games for Sheffield United where he remains a legend in the same sense as someone like Ronnie Allen here. Hagan was adept at playing with either foot, could thread a pass through the eye of a needle and, then embroider your shirt with it and could find the back of the net with great regularity. One England cap – to add to 16 wartime internationals – was scant reward for his gifts, but as good a judge as Bill



Shankly reckoned him to be one of the finest players of all time, and recommendations like that outweigh caps any day.

He moved into coaching at 40, taking over Peterborough United in 1958 and piloting them into the Football League for the first time. In 1960/61, as Tottenham were laying waste to all and sundry by claiming the century's first double, the Posh were doing ok as well, winning the Fourth Division at the first attempt and scoring 134 goals in the process, a tally that remains a record.

That prodigious feat of goalscoring was the very core of the Hagan philosophy, for he said later, "I still enjoy watching soccer, but the game has to "give" something. I like to see clever thoughtful play, accurate passing, unexpected moves, plenty of activity around the goals, snap shooting, thrustful exciting play. Midfield stuff does not impress me at all".

Given his record at London Road, it was no surprise that bigger clubs were paying attention and at the tail end of the 1962/63 season, he was given his chance by the Albion board. After the ineffectual Macaulay, Hagan's disciplinarian methods could hardly have been a bigger contrast, and noses were continually put out of joint in a fashion that Gary Megson would emulate some 40 years later. But where players would perhaps grudgingly accept having to do more and more running, soul-destroying as it could be, it was Hagan's short fuse that could grate the most.

Perhaps like Glenn Hoddle later on, Hagan was such a naturally gifted and instinctively brilliant footballer that he found it hard to accept that mere mortals simply weren't as good as him and couldn't just do what he told them. As the players of his era will say, there was precious little coaching that went on, training consisting of physical work and the odd practice match, so he did little to school his charges, little to improve them, and some players found that especially frustrating.

Perhaps because he was such a natural himself, rather

than working to improve what he'd got, he chose instead to go out and fill the gaps with players that could do what he wanted. And perhaps he was right because few managers in our history ever had a better eye for a player than Hagan. Having surveyed what he had at his disposal at the tail end of 1962/63, he acted swiftly the following year. Terry Simpson followed him from Peterborough to play at centre-half. A young John Kaye was plucked from Scunthorpe United to wear the number nine shirt, Dougie Fraser was persuaded to trade Aberdeen for The Hawthorns on the promise of days on the beach at West Bromwich – imagine his surprise – and the youth team was plundered too, Tony Brown given his chance to impress.

The tracksuit revolt – Hagan refusing to let his players wear tracksuit bottoms to warm up in during December – coloured the season as 19 Albion players went on strike at one stage, but Hagan won that first battle, Don Howe leaving for Arsenal at season's end after being seen as the ringleader. For all that went on – and Albion were unbeaten

in five games that December – the club had taken a step forward, but still there was something missing.

**NOBODY, NOT
EVEN TONY
BROWN, CAME
TO SYMBOLISE
THE CLUB AS
VIVIDLY AS THE
KING DID FOR
THE REST OF
THE DECADE**

Hagan found it in September 1964. Jeff Astle, stolen from Notts County for £25,000 – it's a wonder we weren't throw in

jail. In that single move, Hagan's entire Albion career could be justified, for nobody, not even Tony Brown, came to symbolise the club as vividly as the King did for the rest of the decade. To

add to Astle and Kaye, Hagan underlined his devotion to scoring goals by drafting in England international Ray Crawford from Wolverhampton as well, but possibly by this stage there were too many eggs inside the pudding.

While his commitment to all out attack was laudable, and he should be defended to the death for it, there is such a thing as balance in a football team, and Hagan was struggling to find it at the more exalted level. Where Peterborough could simply overwhelm Fourth Division sides with their blitzkrieg attacks, Albion were up against defenders like Moore, Yeats, Charlton, and strikers like Best, Greaves, Hunt. Mistakes at either end were more seriously punished.

Still Hagan persisted and in 1965/66 he was proved right. While the way he set up the team ensured we could never find the consistency to thrive at





the very top of the table – though finishing sixth with 91 goals was a very creditable achievement – cup tie football seemed to be our metier. Entering the League Cup for the first time, we destroyed all comers putting three past Walsall, four past Leeds, scoring six against Coventry, three against the Villa and beating Peterborough 6-3 on aggregate in the semi-final. The two legged final pitted us against West Ham and after coming away from Upton Park only 2-1 down, the scene was set for one of the great nights in Hawthorns history.

Tony Brown has often said that the team were so wound up that night that they were kicking the dressing room down just to get at West Ham. Once Hagan unleashed them, the Hammers had no answer and the tie was over and the cup won inside 35 minutes as Albion rattled in four goals. It was the perfect exposition of everything Hagan wanted from a team – pace, aggression, quality, attack, attack, attack.

But where the League Cup Final gave him his peak in 1966, twelve months later, it ended his reign. Having wiped out Aston Villa (6-1), Manchester City, Swindon, Northampton and West Ham again on the way to the final – this time held at Wembley – it seemed Albion only

had to turn up to defeat Third Division QPR. At 2-0 up at the break, all was going to the script. Reports vary on what happened in the dressing room, but plenty of players say Hagan tore into his team, giving them no credit for having the game all but won.

**THE HAMMERS
HAD NO ANSWER
AND THE TIE
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WON INSIDE 35
MINUTES AS
ALBION RATTLED
IN FOUR GOALS**

Deflated, with Rodney Marsh suddenly turning on the magic after the Rangers players were allegedly promised a staggering bonus if they turned the game around, and with every possible piece of luck going against them in the second half, the Throstles slumped to one of the

most embarrassing defeats in our history, 3-2. With all the controversy that swirled around him, Hagan would always be vulnerable to defeat, and so when victim to humiliation, he had no defence. He was ousted, but even amid that season's comparative failure, he had brought in John Talbut and John Osborne who were to have a huge impact on our future fortunes, a talent spotter to the end.

He pitched up again in Portugal, coaching Benfica, piloting them to three straight titles and the semi-finals of the European Cup where they were only defeated by Cruyff's Ajax. He had a handy team in Lisbon, including the mighty Eusebio. Hagan and Eusebio might seem an unlikely duo, but the two enjoyed an enduring friendship, the great striker warming to the work that Hagan put him and his team mates through.

"All the players thought his training schedules were too punishing and some were physically sick after the first training session. But after a while, they realised it was worth it as we started winning games. He gave us the extra strength and he is the reason Benfica won three successive championships".

Prophets in another land eh?

PROPHETS IN ANOTHER LAND

BRENDON BATSON



In the last issue of "The Book of Albion", we looked at the career of Brendon Batson before he joined the Throstles as a cultured right-back and central component of the Three Degrees phenomenon which did so much to transform English football and its culture in the blink of an eye.

But once injury forced Brendon to hang up the boots all too early, he continued to play a very important role on the other side of the game as a skilled and trusted administrator, most notably as the right hand man to Gordon Taylor at the Professional Footballers' Association. That was the culmination of a long standing interest in the union and the way in which it represented players.

"When I was at Arsenal as a youngster, Bob Wilson was the PFA delegate at the club. Somehow I ended up speaking to him on behalf of the young players, so I always had that interest in it, but I really became steeped in it from the age of about 21. When I went on to Cambridge United, having signed there with no real knowledge of how contracts

worked, I started to think that I needed to know a bit more about how my industry worked, and my place in it.

"After I joined them, I took over as PFA delegate there and I started going to the meetings they had in Manchester. When I came to The Hawthorns in

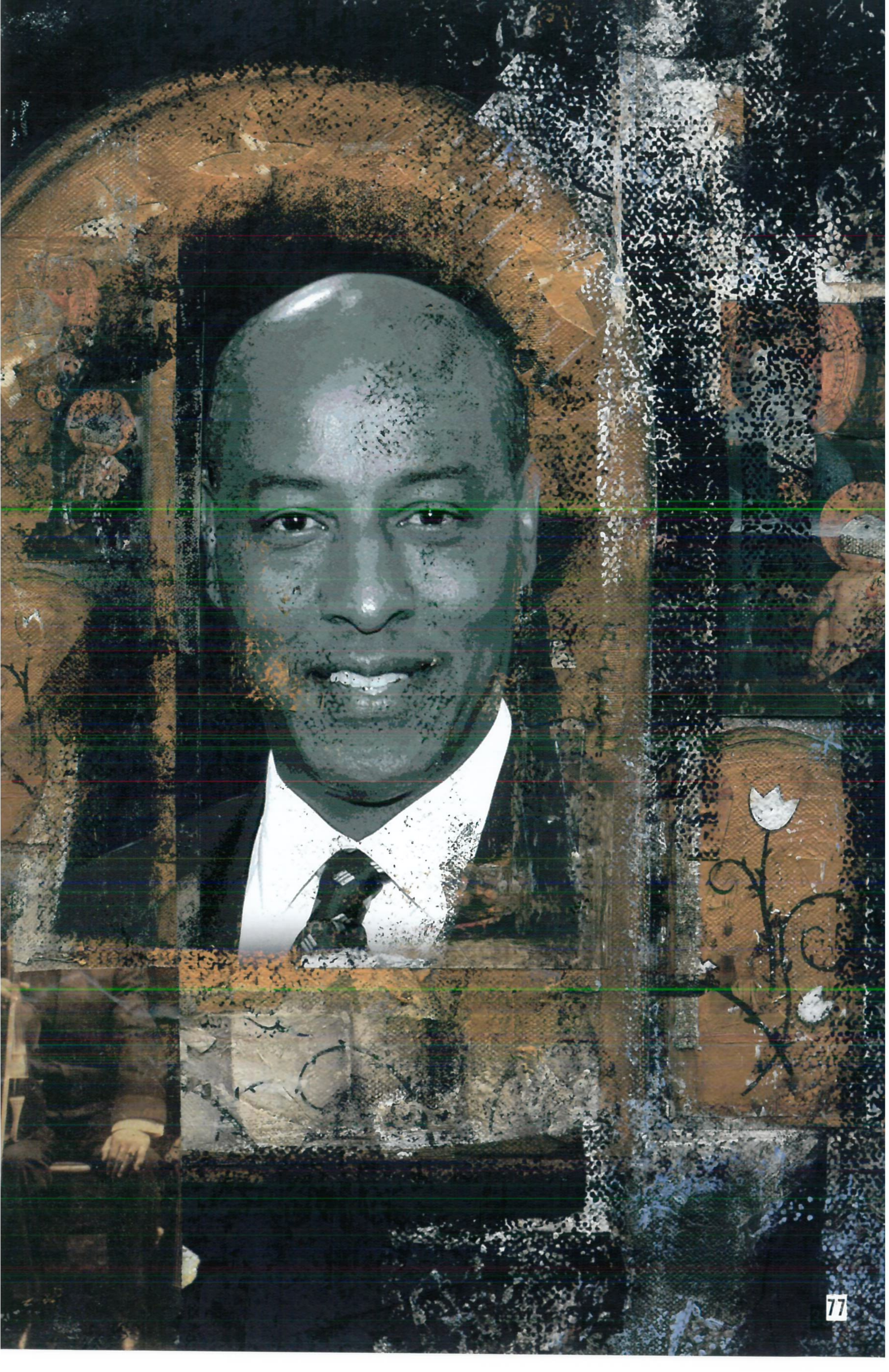
"Players wanted the same freedom that any other worker had, the opportunity to go and work for somebody else"

1978, John Wile was the PFA man here in the dressing room, but he was also the captain and he had plenty on his plate so I took it on from him. That was the era when we were coming towards freedom of contract for players, which meant that at the end of your contract, if you wanted to leave, you could go and the fee would, if necessary, be agreed by a tribunal. Prior to that, even if your deal was

up, if the club didn't want to release you to play for somebody else, it didn't have to, they could keep your registration as long as they liked.

"That was a very exciting time for players in general and for me in particular as a PFA delegate. Derek Dougan was the chairman of the PFA at the time, and he was fantastic. As a speaker, as someone driving things through, he was terrific. I remember going to a regional meeting in Finsbury Park when I was still at Cambridge and the fervour he whipped up, it was like being in a Nuremburg rally! Players wanted the same freedom that any other worker had, the opportunity to go and work for somebody else if that was what you wanted to do, which wasn't possible at the time. It seems unbelievable now, but we're only talking about just over 30 years ago.

"I was heavily involved in the PFA at the Albion, had a reputation for being committed to it within the game, and one day I got a call from Gordon Taylor who had just taken over from Cliff Lloyd as the chief executive. He asked me to go and join the management committee, and I was delighted to do that".



As it turned out, that was a crucial decision for Brendon's future for like all too many players, injury was about to intervene and take his job away from him.

"When I had to retire with injury, it was a horrendous time personally because everything is taken away from you very suddenly, before your time, and you have to cope with that. Mentally, it takes time to come to terms with it. Very quickly though, I moved into working with the PFA full-time. I'd seen how difficult it was breaking into coaching and I fancied seeing where the PFA might take me, but it was a big adjustment, going from training and playing into what was essentially an office job. I had to learn that discipline and it was a transition.

"I started working with Gordon in the January and I was doing two or three days a week initially because I was still involved at the Albion, running my testimonial and so on. Then in May, I went full time as his deputy and within two weeks, Gordon was off on holiday and just left me to it! Actually, Gordon was a great mentor to me, a terrific administrator and

he helped me through learning the rules and regulations. The Football League handbook was our bible and on the train going to and from work, I'd be reading it cover to cover!

"Gradually, as players got to know me, it became easier, because you build up that trust. But the players are always very solidly behind the PFA, whenever there's a dispute and it needs the backing of the players, it's there. From the very top to the bottom, the players know what the PFA can do for them, because even if you are at the top level now, the likelihood is that as you get older, you will drop down the levels and that's when you might need the PFA more. In an era where you've seen a lot of unions fragmenting over the past 20 or 30 years, the PFA is one that has stuck very solidly together, as befits the oldest sporting union, founded up in Manchester in 1907.

"At the same time, it's a very young association in terms of its active membership because the age profile stays roughly the same – men from their late teens to their mid thirties. Then you have the former players, but they all know what it's like to play for a team, to be in a

dressing room, to perform in front of thousands, so in that sense the job hasn't changed.

"I don't fool myself that I'm still in touch with the way players think today because it is different in terms of the exposure, the money and so on. But the beauty of the PFA is it does keep touch because its members and the management committee are players who are still in there, doing the job. When Gordon retires and they drag him away kicking and screaming, I think they'll look for somebody like he was, fairly fresh out of the game and still in touch with it, the way I was when I got involved. That connection with the modern players is so important if you're going to expect them to follow your lead.

"It is a dramatically different world and we have to reflect that. Forty years ago, a player moving clubs would turn up on his own at the new place, meet the manager who would terrify him, and sign whatever was put in front of him. Now a player will have maybe three or four agents who will negotiate for him and he won't necessarily meet the manager until after he's signed. Clubs complain, but they are culpable to a degree in that they exploited players for years, the negotiations weren't fair and eventually players decided they'd had enough. Perhaps it's gone the other way now. There are a lot of good agents out there and there are a lot who just want to make a big, fast buck off a player's back and have done them a lot of harm in terms of the advice given re investments and so on.

"I worked as an agent on behalf of the PFA and people knew there was no conflict of interest with us, that we were looking after the player, not ourselves. But clubs didn't spot the danger of agents getting so much control quickly enough. They'd pay agents to get players which was against the rules, so agents had the run of the game, despite the obvious conflicts of interest that were going on. That was a complete nonsense and it's still a dog's dinner even now, though things have improved".

Player wages are always a

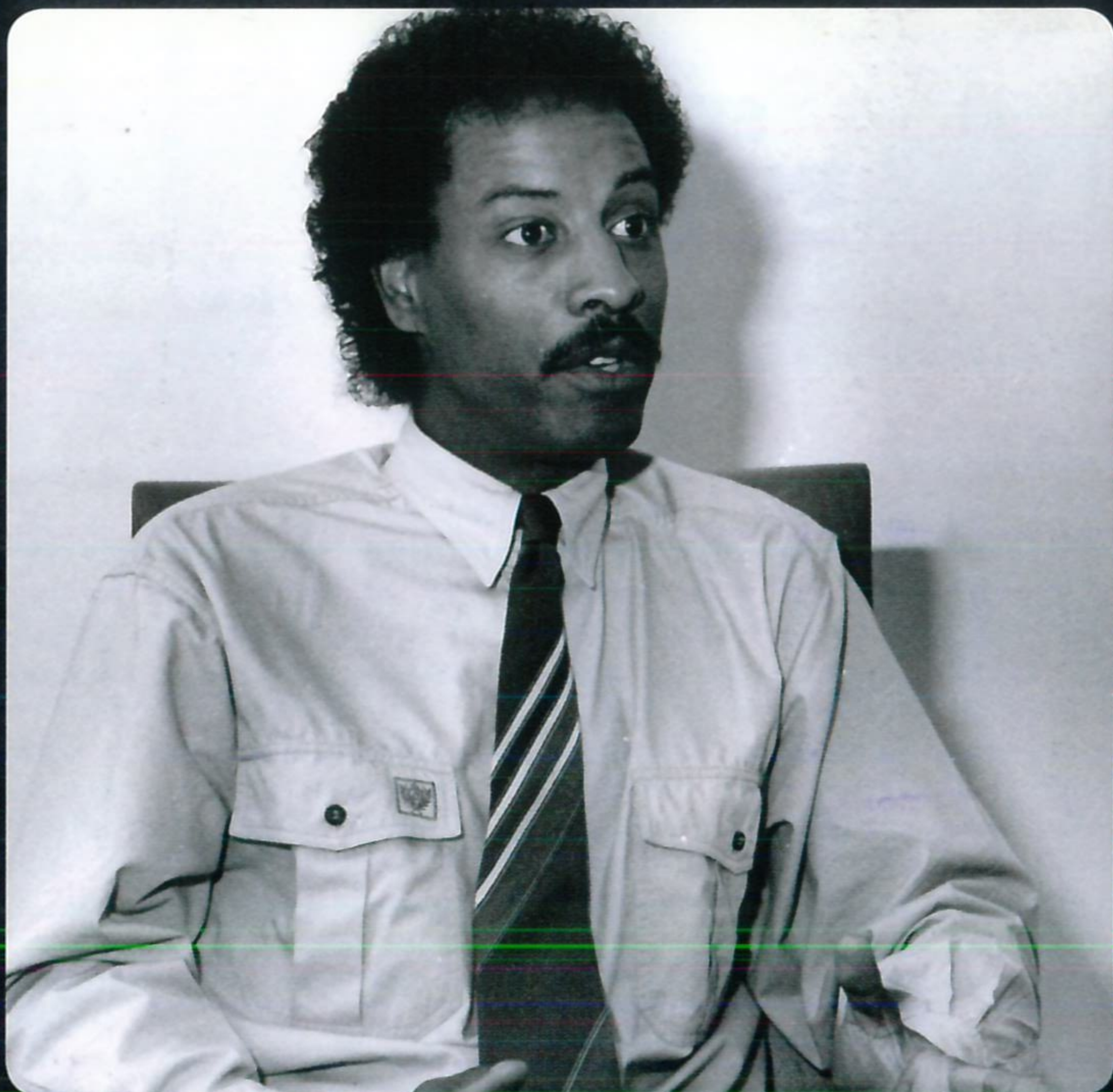


cause for debate, in the press and in the pubs, but Brendon points out that the headline figures of a Rooney or a Tevez are not typical, just as they are not the only sportsmen in the world to be heavily rewarded for doing something comparatively trivial.

"The wider public do resent players earning whatever the going rate currently is and with the state of the economy, that will only be more and more the case. Look at other sports and they earn far greater sums than footballers be it Lee Westwood, Andy Murray, Jenson Button. The average career span for a player is eight to ten years and the vast majority will not be hitting the heights and the money of a David Beckham, a Steven Gerrard, a Frank Lampard. I know from personal experience that players are one injury from retirement, so they need to look out for themselves.

"At the same time, it's the responsibility of the club to pay what it can afford, and very few have adhered to that. Players aren't daft, they know money is no object at Manchester City whereas Newcastle or Everton, clubs like ourselves, Wolves, we are going to be more frugal. It wasn't different in the '70s when Liverpool paid a lot better than Albion, though obviously it's all relative! This is a multi billion pound industry and you would have none of it without the footballers, the industry has grown on the backs of those entertainers as it always has done. Sky pay the money because of the product those players create, so the fact that the players take the lion's share is surely only right, just as Tom Cruise takes a huge chunk of the budget spent on any film he's in.

"The difficulty we have now is that Chelsea and Manchester City distort it all because money is pretty much no object to them, and that drags wages along everywhere else. I think the Premier League has big decisions to make over the next few years. Personally, I still feel Premier League Two is on the horizon, and the fact that parachute payments now cover four years instead of two has almost created it anyway in everything



but name. It inevitably distorts the Championship such that you almost have a revolving door of say 26 or 28 clubs that are an extended Premier League, dropping out and going back in on a regular basis.

"If you look at the solidarity payment made by the Premier League to the Football League, 80% is in the Championship, 12% in League One, 8% goes to League Two. If you are trying to compete and go through the divisions, you have to over reach and if you don't get it right in terms of your contracts, you get a Portsmouth or a Plymouth Argyle situation. It's taken Leeds years to recover, you look at Nottingham Forest, the Sheffield clubs, Birmingham have had their issues. It can be very dangerous to chase success, and just as dangerous not to.

"When you had the old Football League, you could see the thread that ran from First Division to Fourth, clubs moved across all four divisions regularly. But nowadays, what have Manchester City got in common with Hereford United? You won't see the days of Wimbledon, Northampton, Watford as in days of old, because the gap is simply too

huge and that's a loss to the game as a whole.

"If you look at the way the money is sliced up from the very top end to the bottom within the Premier League, wouldn't it have been great if it had been shared equally between the clubs rather than the way it is with money going according to league placings, TV appearances etc? That means the top four or five always get more and more, it's a self perpetuating thing. The impact of the UEFA Financial Fair Play rules will be interesting to see, the Football League have put in some mechanisms to try to counteract financial misadventures and you do almost have to protect the industry from itself. You see it in its starkest form at Arsenal, in a great financial position, but they're being pushed by the fans to spend money to start competing again and they spent a lot of money very quickly in the last transfer window. I'm not suggesting that will create problems for Arsenal financially, but if a club is under pressure from supporters, the temptation is always to spend big, sometimes beyond their means, and that can be catastrophic. We all have to share the blame when it goes wrong".

MMI THE LAZARUS



in your home games. That is the first big step you can take towards constructing a successful season for yourselves, something Manchester United amply illustrated last term. Less than their usual imperious selves on their travels, Sir Alex Ferguson's outfit won 18 and drew only one – guess who to? – over the course of their Old Trafford campaign in 2010/11 and those 55 points were the bedrock of their dash towards a record 19th league title.

It's always the same here too, particularly over the course of the last decade when we've either been trying to fend off relegation or clinch promotion,

as was the case in 2001/02 when we were looking to go one better than the play-off failure of the season before. After an opening home defeat to Grimsby, we'd reeled off wins over Gillingham, Manchester City and Preston North End before coming up short against Wimbledon. Nine points from five home games was adequate, but it wasn't anything special.

That was reflected in a league table that saw the Throstles sitting fifth with 16 points from the first nine games, six points shy of the league leaders who, admittedly, had played a game more. Those leaders were Burnley, having won seven and lost just two from ten, but who, more impressively, were scoring goals at a ferocious rate,

registering 27, more than double the meagre number Albion had managed at that stage.

While questions about the depth of Burnley's squad abounded, suggesting they might not last the pace, their arrival at The Hawthorns in late September 2001 was a real test of our own credentials. Stan Ternent's team were using the quality of Alan Moore and Glen Little out wide and Ian Moore and Gareth Taylor through the middle to create havoc and score goals among the teams in Division One, a classic formula, but one to which few sides appeared to have the answer.

Gary Megson's answer was to finally deploy his new signing, Darren Moore, at centre-half, to counter the crosses coming



SEASON MMII



in from either flank, Moore replacing Tony Butler at the heart of the defence after four games stuck on the bench, taking a watching brief.

When the hulking centre-half appeared on the pitch for the first time, with the physique of Cyrille Regis, if not so quick – you want me to lie Mooro? – we could hardly have imagined that we were witnessing the arrival of a bona fide Albion folk hero. Quickly renamed Big Dave after the character in a Pot Noodle advert, Darren Moore became one of the focal points of Albion's resurgence, instantly loved by the fans for his no nonsense approach to the game. If the ball was there to be headed, he headed it. If it was there to be kicked into touch or clear, he kicked it. If there was a whippy sprinter to catch...he left it to Larus Sigurdsson.

Introducing himself to the supporters, Moore said, "My game is to be strong, to be defensively sound. I'm not one to

mess around much at the back, I'm one who can help us organise, the players around me and myself, and just try to make sure we're not a side that leaks any goals". Music to Gary Megson's ears as he marshalled the squad for an assault on promotion, with barely a discordant tippy nor tappy note to be sounded.

His introduction against Burnley could not have been more timely, for the visitors were in confident mood but they come up against a rock solid Albion barrier, Moore impressing, Sigurdsson simply outstanding as the Baggies gradually exerted more and more influence over the game. By the break, we were in control, playing much of the game in Burnley's half without creating too many opportunities, but always comfortable in mopping up any attacks they threatened to have.

It took until midway through the second half for the crucial goal to arrive, and, as

seemed inevitable at that stage of the season, it was left to young Scott Dobie to score it, the source the equally predictable Neil Clement. After Clem had been elbowed by Kevin Ball, he took his retribution by floating a free-kick into the Burnley six yard box, Dobie rising to glance his header into the net, a goal similar to the winner at Portsmouth earlier in the week. Burnley were simply unequal to the challenge of fighting back and if Albion still trailed them in the table at the end of the game, it was very apparent which team was best equipped for a push at promotion.

Gary Megson praised the eternal verities that had put Albion into such a position after the game. "People may pass and finish better than us but people should never outwork us. Burnley worked really hard and you could see why they are where they are. They're difficult to break down and they've got some good players. We had to be at our best to keep a clean sheet. We might not have lost this game last season, but we probably wouldn't have won it. It was a tight, hard fought match, as they always are against Burnley. I said at half-time if it takes a set play to win it, so be it. We stuck at it and got our rewards.

"September was a good month for West Brom. We won six of our seven matches and all the players came out with great credit. Considering we played the entire month without Jason Roberts and Danny Dichio, the lads can be really pleased with their efforts".

Scott Dobie in particular had cause to be pleased. A complete unknown when brought in from Carlisle United in the summer, there was little intention of using him as anything but back up, seen, as he was, as a player for the future. But when the need

was there because of a spate of injuries, Dobie stepped up to the plate and rattled in eight goals in seven games. Without his contribution, perhaps Albion would not have got themselves anywhere near the promotion scrap and the following decade might just have been very, very different.

A blank Saturday followed before on Tuesday October 9th, Premier League Charlton Athletic were here for a third round League Cup tie, Megson noting in the programme that, "This will be the first game of our next nine in which we don't have a single Saturday fixture. It just underlines how much football has changed – and is changing. However much we might not like it, it is something we have to accept, that other people who are bringing finance into football will, at times, all the tune".

Charlton were powerful opponents with plenty of quality in their squad including the likes of Jonatan Johansson, Chris Powell, Jason Euell, Paul Konchesky, Mark Fish, Mark Kinsella and a youngster in goal called Dean Kiely. These were pre squad rotation days and both teams fielded strong starting elevens, Albion making the liveliest beginning, Gary Megson saying, "I thought we set off fine against Charlton, in the first 15 minutes we should have pressed home our advantage and scored at least once".

That Albion failed to do, and it proved a damaging omission in the 18th minute when they conceded a controversial penalty for an infringement on Powell by Des Lytle, Euell sticking the spot kick away. What followed did not please the Albion boss.

"When we did go behind,

Charlton passed the ball around too easily for my liking and the half time whistle couldn't come soon enough for me. We have to learn lessons. When we played at a high tempo, when we played quick, incisive football, I thought we looked like scoring every time we got the ball.

"In the second half we were much more like it, our tempo was raised, our closing down improved, we were more threatening but as much as we huffed and puffed, we couldn't get on the scoresheet which is something that is becoming a concern. Our last few games, the only people scoring goals are Scott Dobie and Neil Clement and we've got to get to a situation where others chip in. If they're not capable of doing it, we have to bring players in who are capable without harming other areas of the team.

"It doesn't get any more stark. You've got 90 minutes when for 30 of them, we played at a slow tempo, took ages to do everything and looked an average side at best. When we got among them, we caused them an awful lot of problems. We need to play at a level that suits us".

Albion had a chance to redress the balance just 48 hours later, asked to play again on the Thursday night at home to Millwall at the behest of ITV Digital – remember them? No, nobody else does either. But they had Football League rights and introduced Thursday night games, which was all well and good, except, as Derek McInnes noted, it meant in this case the playing field was anything but level.

"It was ridiculous to play again so soon with Millwall not having played on the Tuesday. At Christmas or Easter you play two in three days but both sides are in the same boat then. Millwall could start preparing



MMI MMI

on the Monday, but we didn't really start thinking about them until Thursday afternoon which is a bit unfair".

To add insult to injury – actually, the other way round – Albion were also without goalkeeper Russell Hoults. With the fixture list so congested, the squad had stayed in local hotels between the Charlton and Millwall games and compressed into a hotel bed, the giant goalkeeper woke with a back spasm on the Thursday morning and had to be replaced by Brian "The Beast" Jensen. That was one of four changes that saw the cup tied Darren Moore and Andy Johnson restored to the XI and Ruel Fox preferred to Bob Taylor up front, the Fox switch a failure as the manager confessed: "Foxy was up there so he could come to feet and young Scott could go on behind, so with Foxy getting the ball we could get midfielders past him, but it didn't work at all". So much so that Darren Moore was removed after half an hour to be replaced by Bob Taylor in a rare outbreak of 4-4-2. By then though, the damage had been done.



Millwall, managed by former Wolves boss Mark McGhee who was treated to a warm welcome as ever at The Hawthorns, took full advantage of Albion's exhausted bodies and leaden feet, and produced an opening half an hour of exceptional football, full of pace, intelligence, incision, such that the Throstles were constantly sliced to ribbons,

Steve Claridge's performance at centre-forward a masterclass.

It was Claridge's movement that gave Richard Sadlier his first opening in the 18th minute, beating Sigurdsson down the edge of the box before cutting in and beating The Beast at his near post. Nine minutes later, Sadlier was left unmarked and able to divert Bicham's hot past Jensen from close range.

McInnes wrote that, "At half-time the manager said that though we were losing and we were a tired team, we should make sure that we got clapped off the park for our effort and I think our commitment was good. We played most of the time in their half, put plenty in the box, could have scored early on, and that was what cost us – if we'd pulled one back early on I'd have fancied us to get something out of the game".

As it was, 2-0 to Millwall saw Albion 14 games into the season and in sixth place, five points behind the leaders, who had two games in hand. And the identity of those leaders? Crystal Palace. Spotters badge if you got that right.



ANGELS IN THE ARCHITECTURE

KENNY FOGGO



In the previous issue of "The Book Of Albion", we discussed the early career of Kenny Foggo, our Scottish winger from the 1960s. Having been scouted by the Throstles, made the move south, settled into digs and begun to impress in the reserves, when the 1962/63 season was in full swing, Foggo found himself a part of Archie Macaulay's team, playing some 25 games that season.

"That's not bad is it? But it's sad that I can't really remember some of those games and goals. Some stick out but others are just a blur – I can't even remember scoring my first goal! I do remember when

I scored two goals in a match for the first time. It was against Arsenal in an evening match at the Hawthorns and we beat them 4-0. It was the first game that my Mum and Dad came down to watch me play. I also remember Ian Ure played at centre-half for the Gunners that night, and he looked lost. I think it may have been his debut for them, he'd just come down from Scotland".

As happens to us all as we get older, friends and

contemporaries start to fall by the wayside and that's as true of Kenny as any. But he still has some powerful memories of the likes of the King.

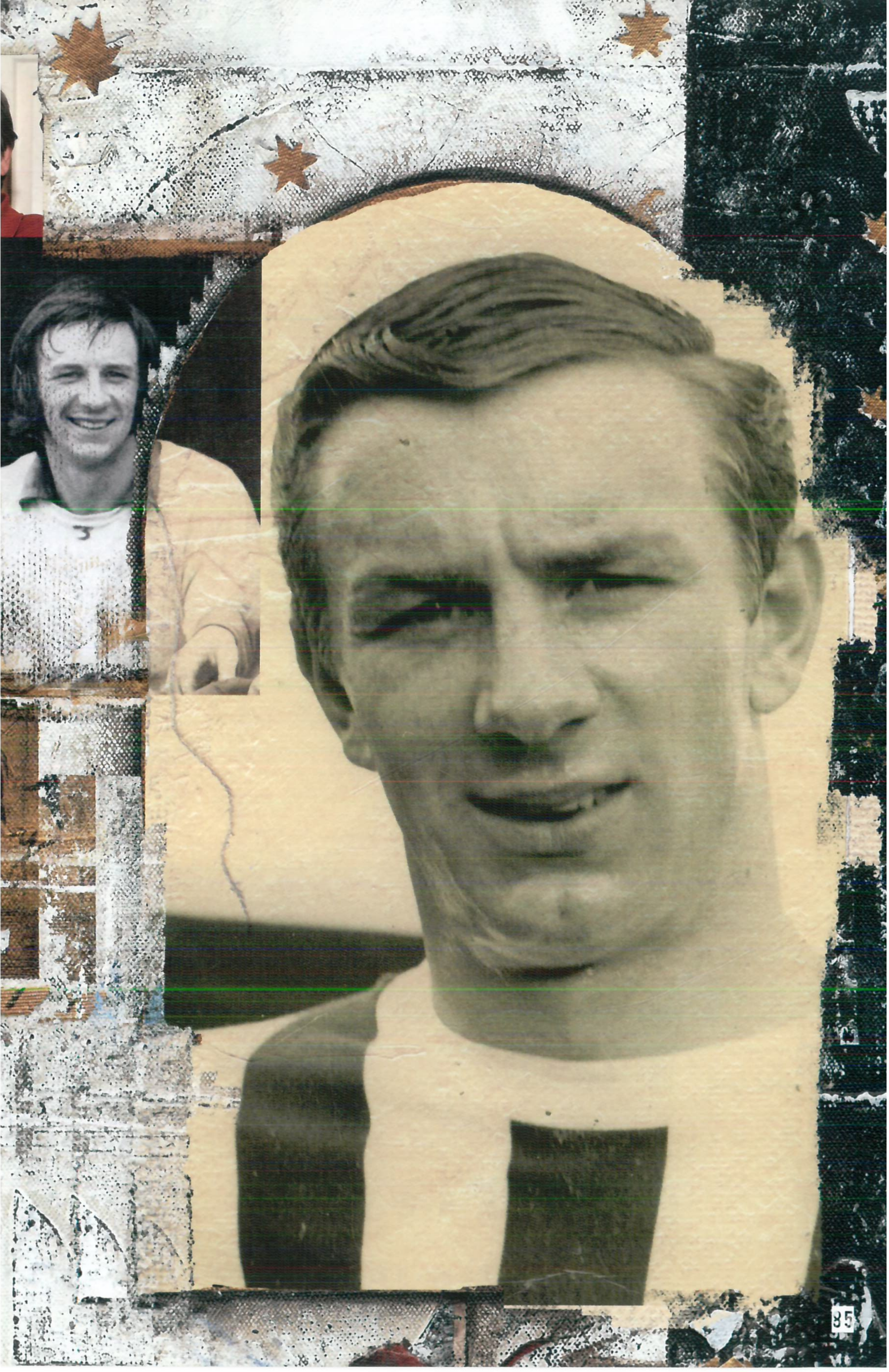
"I always remember Jeff used to call me 'Youth'. 'Oi! Youth' he used to say. He was a real character, was Jeff. He was a real joker. I used to get in early to get changed, because you wanted to hear the new jokes. I don't think I ever heard him repeat one. I don't know where he

got them from, but he was a natural, a real entertainer. When he went on 'Fantasy Football' on telly, that was Jeff through and through, just the way he was. I can see why Frank Skinner had him on the show, because

he was probably his hero anyway. Mind you he was to almost everybody, because he was always scoring goals. Youngsters liked the goalscorers especially. I can imagine him being a hero to a lot of kids and Albion supporters, he was a great lad. It was so sad when he died.

"The same with Bobby Cram who passed a few years back. We were muckers me and Crammy. We'd go everywhere together. His wife Ann and my wife were

"Some stick out but others are just a blur – I can't even remember scoring my first goal!"



also big friends. I remember us all going to the Rum Runner in Birmingham to see Tom Jones. Then Crammy moved to Colchester, you lose touch a bit, that's the way football goes. Later, when he went to Canada, I met him at a hotel in London and that's the last time I saw him.

"I still remember that game against Stoke when he got his hat-trick. What a runner, he should have been a long distance runner – he was related to Steve Cram, so it was obviously in the genes. Bobby used to do more runs than me. He used to overlap all the time and I used to drop back to right-back. He was never out of breath, that's what surprised me. I was never a long distance runner myself, a sprinter yes, but not long distance. But he just never stopped. He was tremendous. Such a shame that he has gone. I still can't believe it".

Still with us, thank the Lord, is His Holiness Tony Brown, another of Kenny's contemporaries.

"I remember playing in the third team and the reserves with Tony and he played up the front then, centre-forward I think. Jimmy must have seen something in him as a boy, and he brought him back to midfield. Tony went from strength to strength from there, but actually, he was one of the main reasons I left the club in the end. Jimmy Hagan brought him into the side more regularly when I got injured. We played at Northampton in an evening match and I think we won three something, went top of the league as well. I got injured and was in absolute agony, the worst injury I ever had. I had it X-rayed but nothing showed up.

"I think we were due to play Everton in the next match and Fred Pedley was giving me massage, and they were scraping me off the ceiling with the pain. So I couldn't play and they sent me for another X-ray and on that one, this bump appeared on the bone. I had cracked it, and this was the callous forming. So that was me out for a good while and that was when Tony come into the side and was banging in the goals.

"That was the beginning of the end for me because they

changed the set up of the team. They were playing with one winger, with Tony wide as well, but not a proper winger in the real sense. On the other side you had Chippy Clark with Jeff Astle up front, and probably two bombing through, with Tony breaking into the box late. When I was fit again, Jimmy Hagan in his infinite wisdom, gave me my place back against Leeds in the cup. Of course you can imagine it can't you? Leeds away, my first game back, and first tackle, that was me up in the air! I think we lost four something. That was basically it really".

In the latter days of the Hagan reign, Foggo found himself more on the periphery

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of things as Albion reached the League Cup Final in both 1966 – beating West Ham over two legs – and 1967 when they lost to Queens Park Rangers at Wembley.

"I particularly remember the game against West Ham at Upton Park. That was the final, the first leg, and we were trying to keep it as tight as possible, so we didn't do a lot of attacking. I played in that game which was a rarity by then. For some unknown reason Jimmy Hagan decided to bring me into the side. I don't know why, but that was Hagan. But then he dropped me

again for the second leg at the Hawthorns when we were going for it to overturn a 2-1 deficit.

"I must say I wasn't enamoured with the man. Yet I met him some years later when I was abroad with Norwich and he came to one of the games and a nicer man you couldn't have wished to meet. Completely different to when he was manager at West Brom. He was charming, and all the other players were saying, 'I thought you didn't like him!' But this is what he was like. We always used to say if there was a full moon we were in trouble!

"He was a fitness fanatic, and had us running around the track a dozen times to warm up, and his favourite song was 'Keep on Running', the old Spencer Davis hit. God, I hate that song! But that was Jimmy Hagan.

"The thing people always talk about is the tracksuit revolt. We were at the new training ground at Spring Road. It was on a plateau, and when the wind blew, it blew! We had a thin T-shirt, thin shorts, and that was it. His idea was if you wanted to warm up, you had to run. We weren't allowed any tracksuit bottoms and it was just bitterly cold, and that just seemed stupid to all of us. It just seemed petty and unnecessary, it really did. So the players wouldn't train.

"Then there was the incident where he reversed his car down the bank at Spring Road and into the canal. He just reversed out and went too far. I don't know if you have seen that slope, but when you look at it, I'm amazed that he was still alive. That was just luck. He somersaulted down the bank, and the car landed on its roof, and then bounced upright, landing in the canal the right way up. If it had been the other way around and he had landed with the roof ending up in the water, he would have had a job getting out.

"It was just sheer luck that the car turned over and landed the right way up and so it didn't submerge. What saved him as well was, he had one of these old fashioned Crombie overcoats, and you know how thick and heavy those were. They say that probably helped him. One

or two of the lads scrambled down to help him – again, he was lucky really because we were all in the car park waiting to go, but waiting about for the team for the Arsenal game to be announced first.

“Poor Tony Millington was one of the first to get down there. When he got there Hagan said, ‘You’re puffing a bit Tony!’ And that was all the thanks he gave them! He actually did his ankle in getting down there. I didn’t enjoy it at all under Hagan. His man management was non-existent. Tactically he could tell you all the moves you got wrong. As a person he was not very nice. I didn’t like him at all at Albion but as I say, away from the game he was a different person”.

Hagan’s Hawthorns fate was sealed at Wembley when Albion were beaten by Third Division QPR in the League Cup Final. Kenny was on the bench for that game.

“I was named in the squad for the final against QPR, and we were all on tenterhooks of course. At the last minute, Stan Jones failed a fitness test, and I got the sub’s job. If Stan had played, then he would have named someone else, a defender, just in case Stan wasn’t fully fit and I would have been left out. But because Stan didn’t play, I was in.

“We should have won that game, really we should. I mean, 2-0 up at half time and we got a rollocking from the manger! We couldn’t believe it. We all wondered what was going on. We had played pretty well, were 2-0 up and then we were told that we were rubbish. I know one of their goals shouldn’t have been allowed because of the foul on our ‘keeper, Dick Sheppard, who had the stud marks down his chest. Also Graham Williams got hit in the eye by the ball. Graham couldn’t see through one eye. He was left-back and on the far side from the dugout. He was calling to be subbed but Jimmy Hagan wouldn’t take him off. He was bleeding behind the eye and had to go to hospital after the game, but he wouldn’t substitute him. The directors got rid of him



after that. That was the last straw, because the players weren't happy.

"There is one thing that has always bugged me about that game. I was sub and I went to go up to the Royal Box to get my tankard, when the steward stopped me, and said, 'Sorry you can't go up there'. I said, 'Why not I'm a player, and in the team'. He said, 'No, because you're only a sub, and only the players that actually played are allowed up to the Royal Box to get their awards'. I was not happy, how petty is that?

"Funnily enough after that game, I played the last 11 or 12 matches, until the end of the season. The next game, we played Arsenal and we lost 1-0. It was a typical lucky win for the Arsenal and we played quite well. We were in relegation trouble, but in that run we only lost once more and pulled clear. I remember the last game of the season against Newcastle and I scored in that as well. We won 6-1 I think it was, Bomber got a hat-trick.

"After Hagan, Alan Ashman came in the summer, I played the first two games, scored in the 3-3 draw at Molineux, but that was my last game. But I have to say I was probably my own worst enemy because that pre-season I thought to myself, Jimmy Hagan is not going to be there, so I had a wonderful summer. I remember, one of my mates, an old school friend got married, and that celebration went on for a week! When I came back for pre-season I was four or five pounds overweight and it was a job to get it off.

"What made it worse, we did a little pre-season training, then we went away for week and played Bristol City, Bournemouth and Portsmouth. We were staying in the Dormy Hotel at Ferndown. What a lovely hotel that was, breakfast, lunches and evening meals! I think we put weight on. Still, we won every game and I think I scored against Bristol City. When we got back Alan Ashman left me out and I thought, "Oh no, not again. Am I going to have the same problem as I did with Jimmy Hagan?"

"So I just said to Alan "Look, I don't want to play in the reserves again. If anyone comes in for me, then I'm interested". Plymouth Argyle came in first, but when I was at Albion, we played at Plymouth in the FA Cup. Archie Macaulay was the manager then, and he took two or three of the youngsters, to get them used to being with the first team, stopping over and that. What a journey! It was horrendous. When they came in for me I thought, 'I'm not signing for them'. So when Norwich came in for me I went there. Mind you, what a journey that is as well! We were spoilt at West Bromwich,

"There are some great memories. I remember going to America for the New York tournament and to go there in the 1960s really was something. Actually, it turned out to be a horrible tour we were glad to get away. Even Jimmy Hagan was pleased we got knocked out and could come home!"

because you are at the centre of everything. At Norwich, you got to Newmarket and you thought, "God, we still have another 50 miles to go!"

"I thoroughly enjoyed being with Albion, apart from Mr Hagan. I really enjoyed being back for the last reunion a couple of years back, meeting the likes of Graham Williams, John Kaye, Terry Simpson, Bomber. It was great to see them all again.

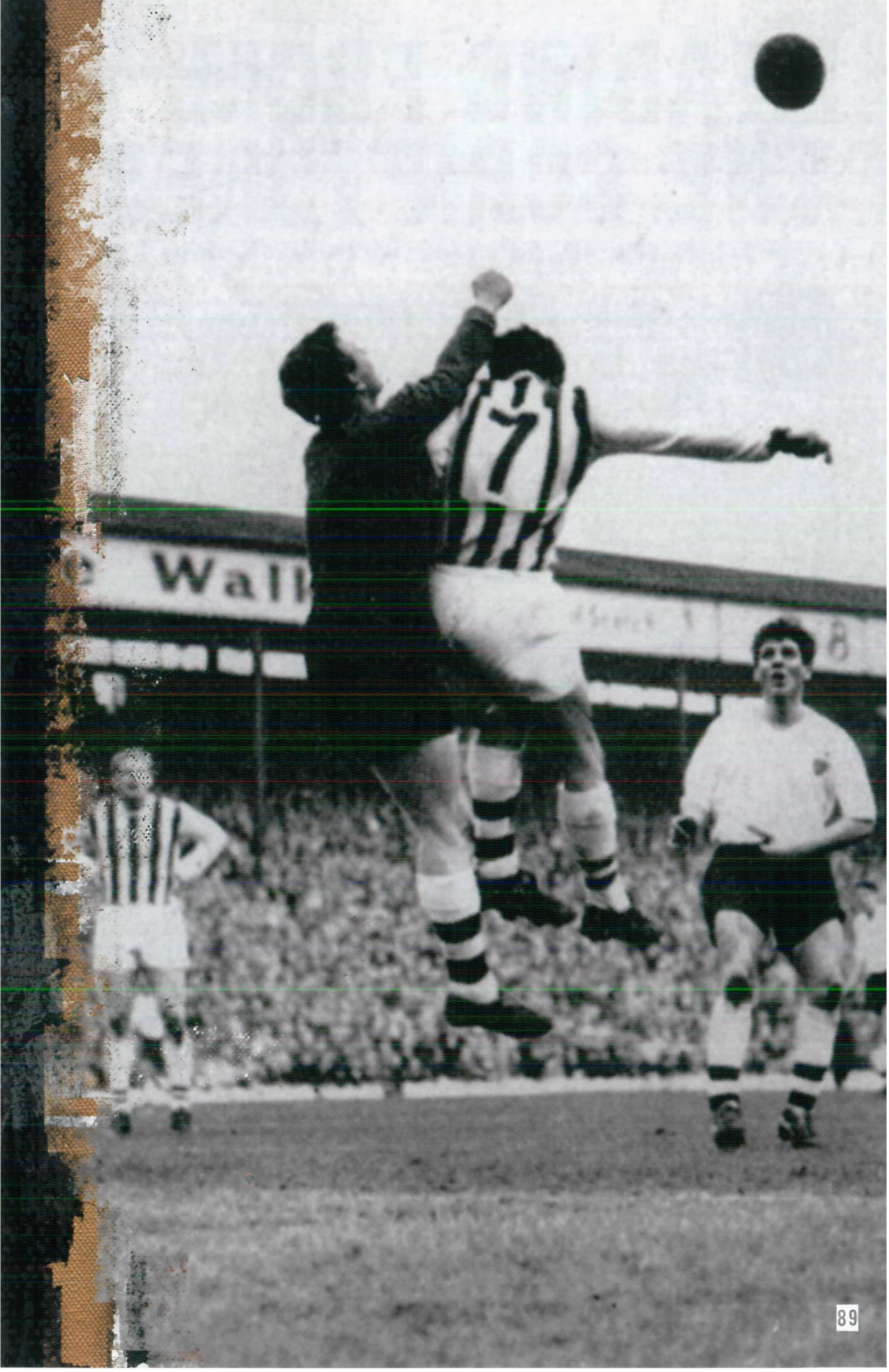
"There are some great memories. I remember going to America for the New York tournament and to go there in the 1960s really was something. Actually, it turned out to be a horrible tour we were glad to get away. Even Jimmy Hagan was pleased we got knocked out and could come home! It was horrible, and some of the opposition players from those sides were horrible too. I remember one lad, an international who played in the World Cup, spat in Stan Jones' face. The humidity was the main problem though. It was just exhausting".

After Norwich, Kenny had a spell with Portsmouth before ending up at Southend United.

"Pompey had financial problems, they had to get rid of players. I was one of the older players, so I got in touch with Peter Sylvester at Southend and went there for a very enjoyable season. I was living in Ilford at the time and commuting down the Southend Road to Southend. Then Bobby Kellard, the old Southend player, took over at Chelmsford. I had packed it in by then but Bobby asked if I'd go over. So I went to Chelmsford for a year, and played with Jimmy Greaves who was there. He was amazing. I dread to think how much he would cost in today's market. He was awesome.

"I remember we played Spurs at The Hawthorns once and we put Chuck Drury on him. His sole job was to mark Greavesie. For 89 minutes he did just that, brilliantly. Then that one split second, Greaves was in and we lost 1-0. I also remember another game at The Hawthorns we played Spurs, and Tony Marchi played at right-half because Danny Blanchflower was injured. Marchi hit a cross that sailed over Ray Potter's head and into the net and they won 1-0. There was no way he meant that, but it was just after they had won the double, and everything was going for them. We just couldn't get the ball off them. They were awesome. It was a privilege to watch that team".

Interview by Laurie Rampling. Written by Dave Bowler.



READING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

HOW TO BE THE BETTER HALF BY BOBBY ROBSON



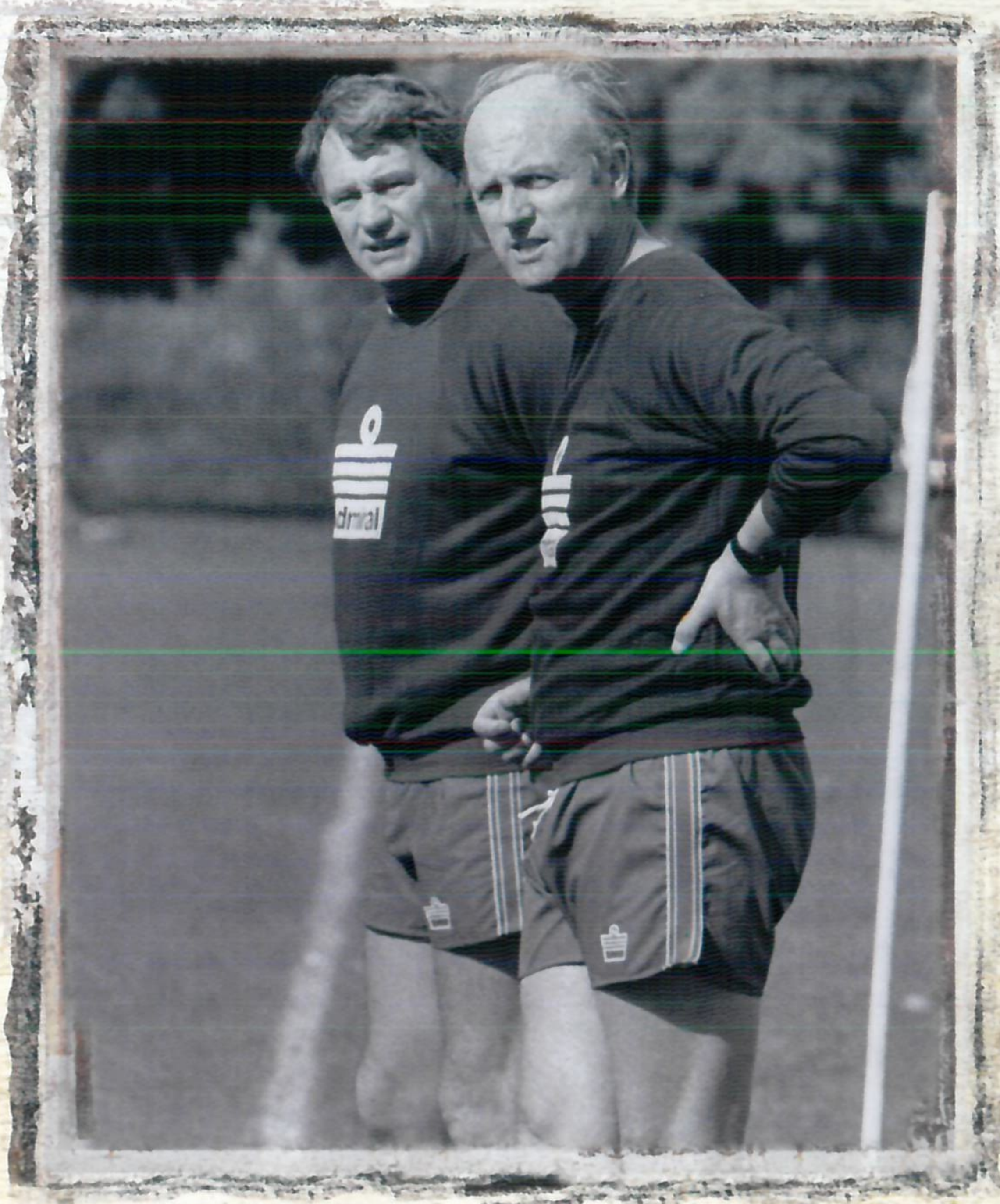
here was a time, long, long ago, when the pages of football magazines and annuals would hum to the talk of tactics rather than trivia. Cars were things that only internationals drove – and then very humble affairs – while wags were either dressing room comedians or what dogs did with their tails. So it was that when Albion's Bobby Robson penned a piece in 1962, it was all about winning the wing-half's battle. A different time, a different game, but nonetheless interesting for that as we reproduce the thoughts of one of England's great footballing men.

What precisely is the job of the wing-half? Is it defence, or is it attack? To beat back the opposition against the odds: or to thrust forward, piercing, probing, to cause consternation in the enemy's goalmouth? The short answer is that we have two quite opposite functions. We must help deep in the full-back's territory when the need is dire: and yet also coast in behind the breaking waves of forwards. It's not really a question of defence or attack. No, for me it is defence and attack: the best – and the worst – of both worlds. We have to act as a link between the two.

Let us look at the differences between the two functions. Simply, they are as follows: when the other side has the ball, you are defending – because, let's face it, you cannot attack unless you have the ball, can you? It may be your immediate job to mark the opposing inside-forward, but if the other side have broken through and you are faced with the situation of four defenders against five attackers, then it means you may have to cover up.

In diagram 1 for example, the right-half must forsake the inside-left in order to stop the inside-right. Primarily a wing-half in the normal flow of play must be a good defender for without his help the opposing forward line will have spare men when attacking his goal – and usually one of them will have reached the vital position in front of the posts. Only too easily it can end with your goalkeeper picking the ball out of the net – and you wouldn't be much help by being 30 yards away, thinking about attack!!!

On the other hand, when the ball has been won by your side, you can – indeed you must – think in terms of attack. It is essential for the wing-half when he is in possession of the ball to act quickly, while the opposition players are still in attacking positions. If you strike at once, you may penetrate their defence before they can consolidate. This is largely what we call a "service" ball to forwards in good positions. This does not necessarily mean you give the ball to the nearest man on your side. You may



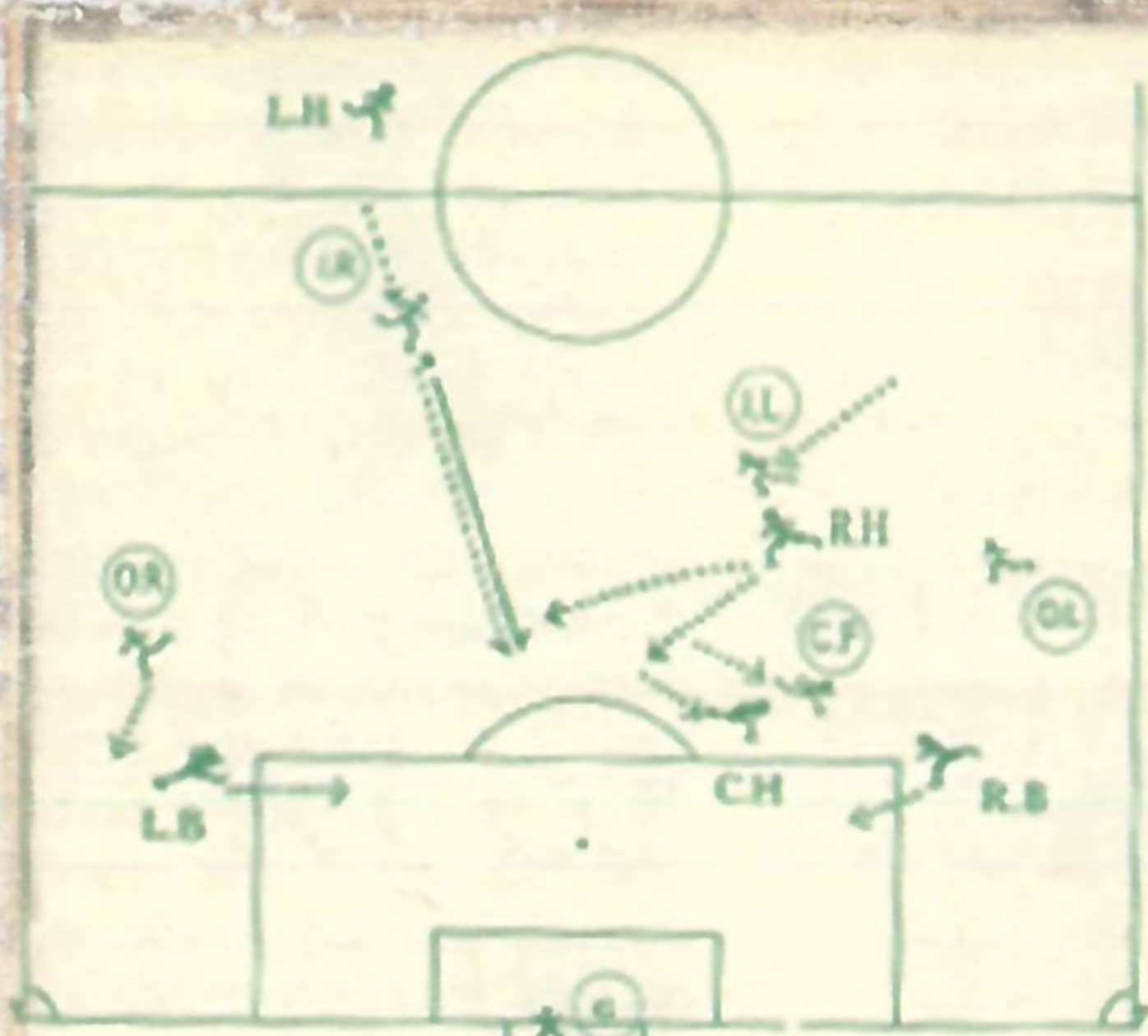


DIAGRAM 1

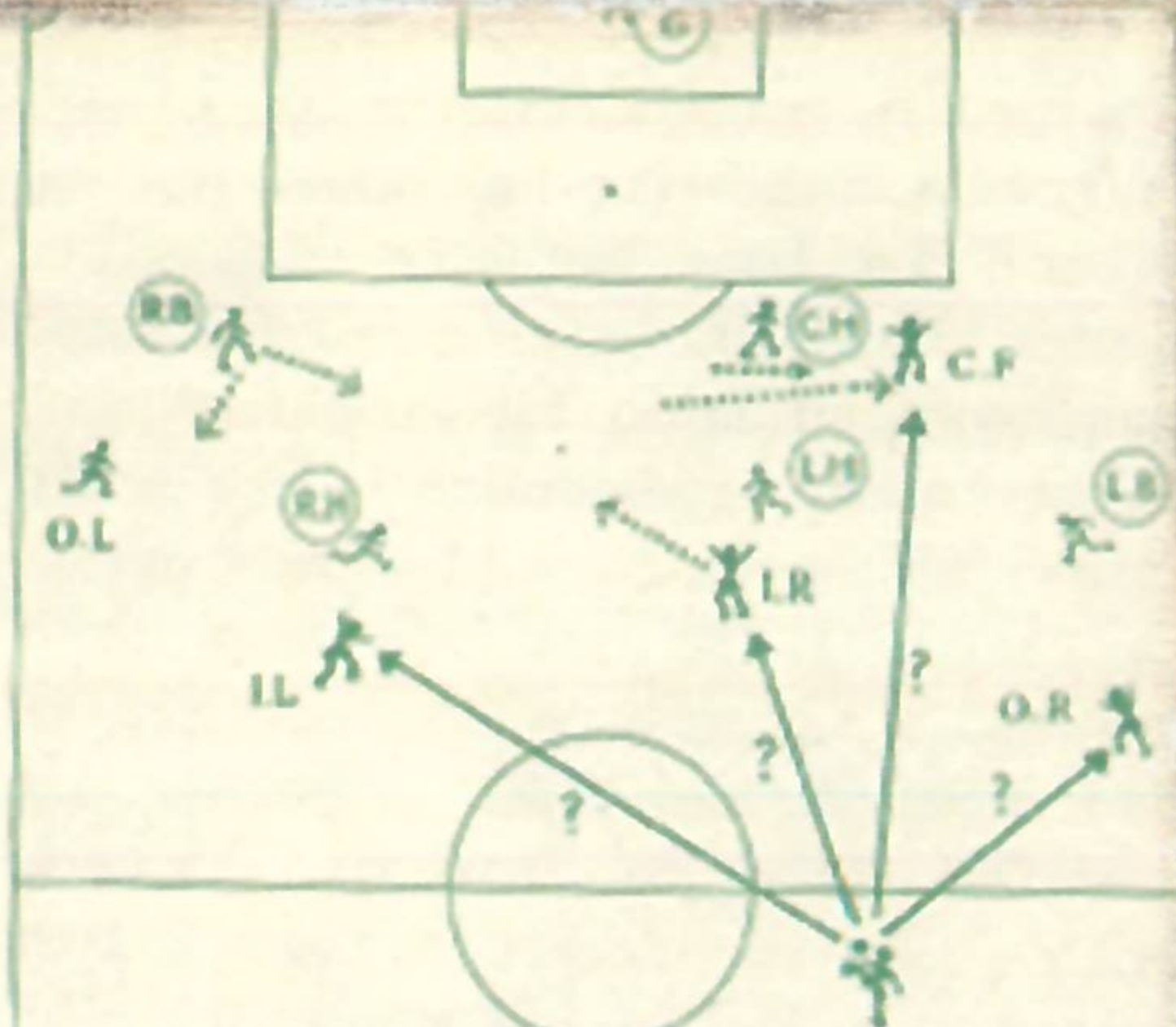


DIAGRAM 2

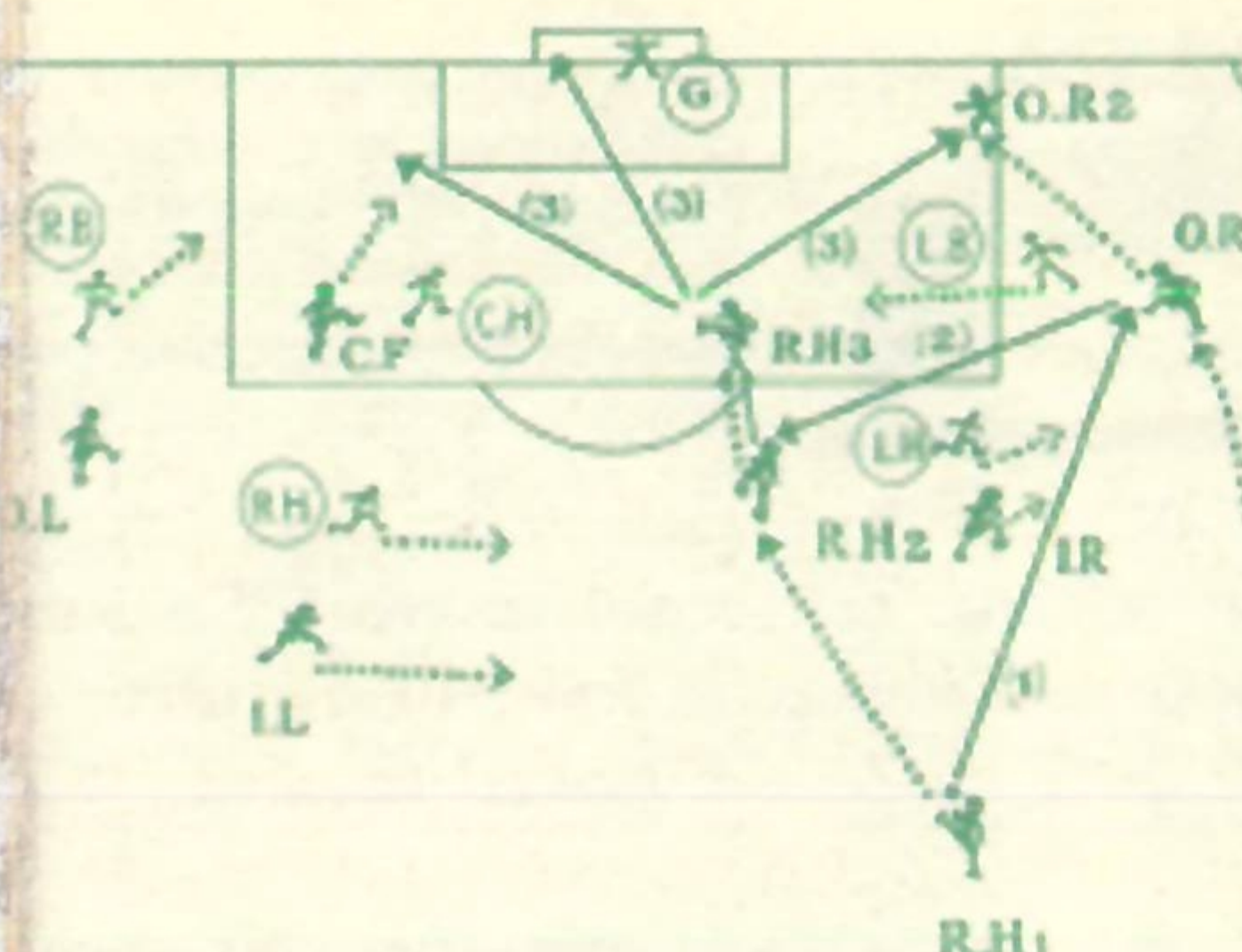


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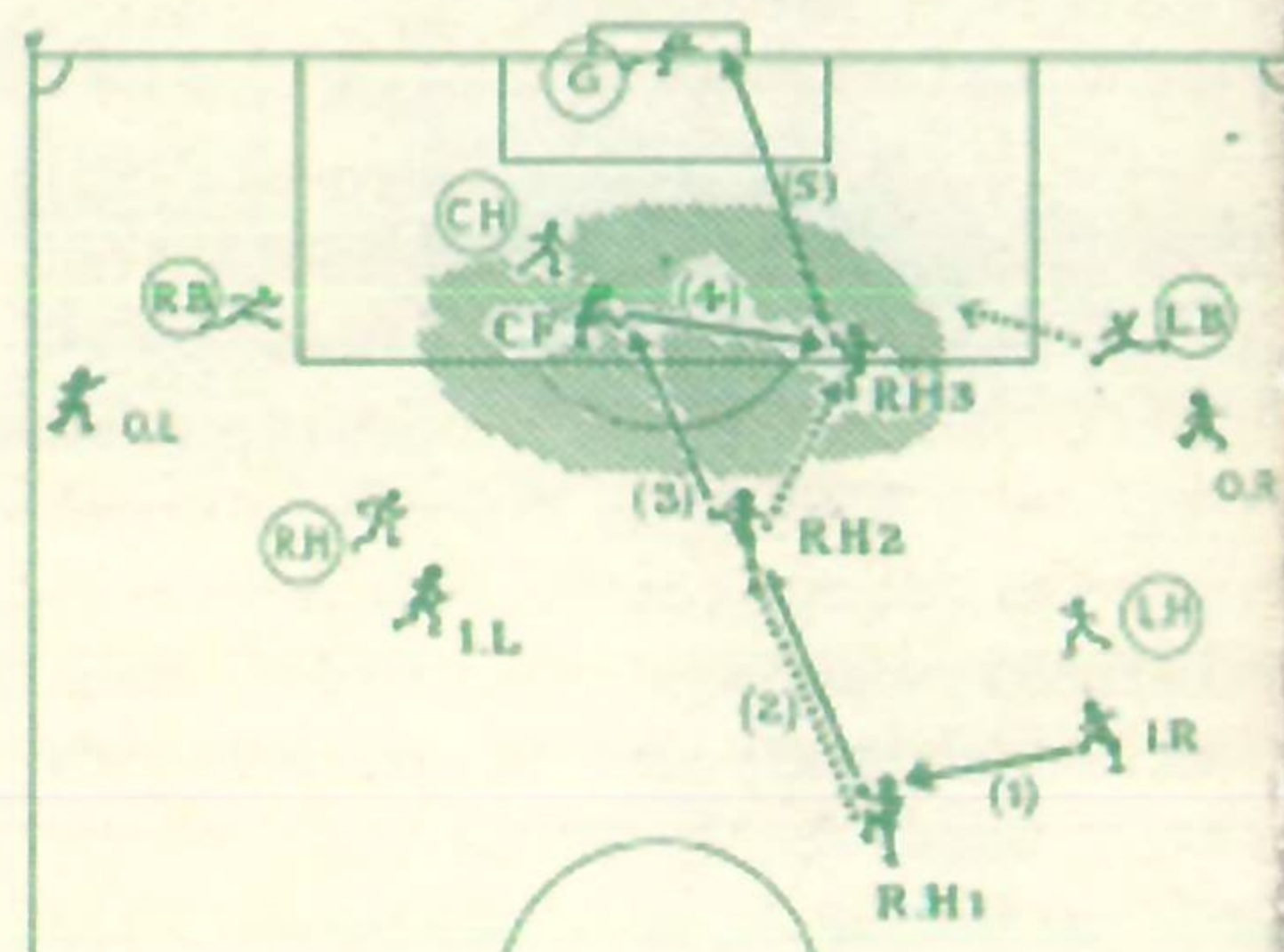
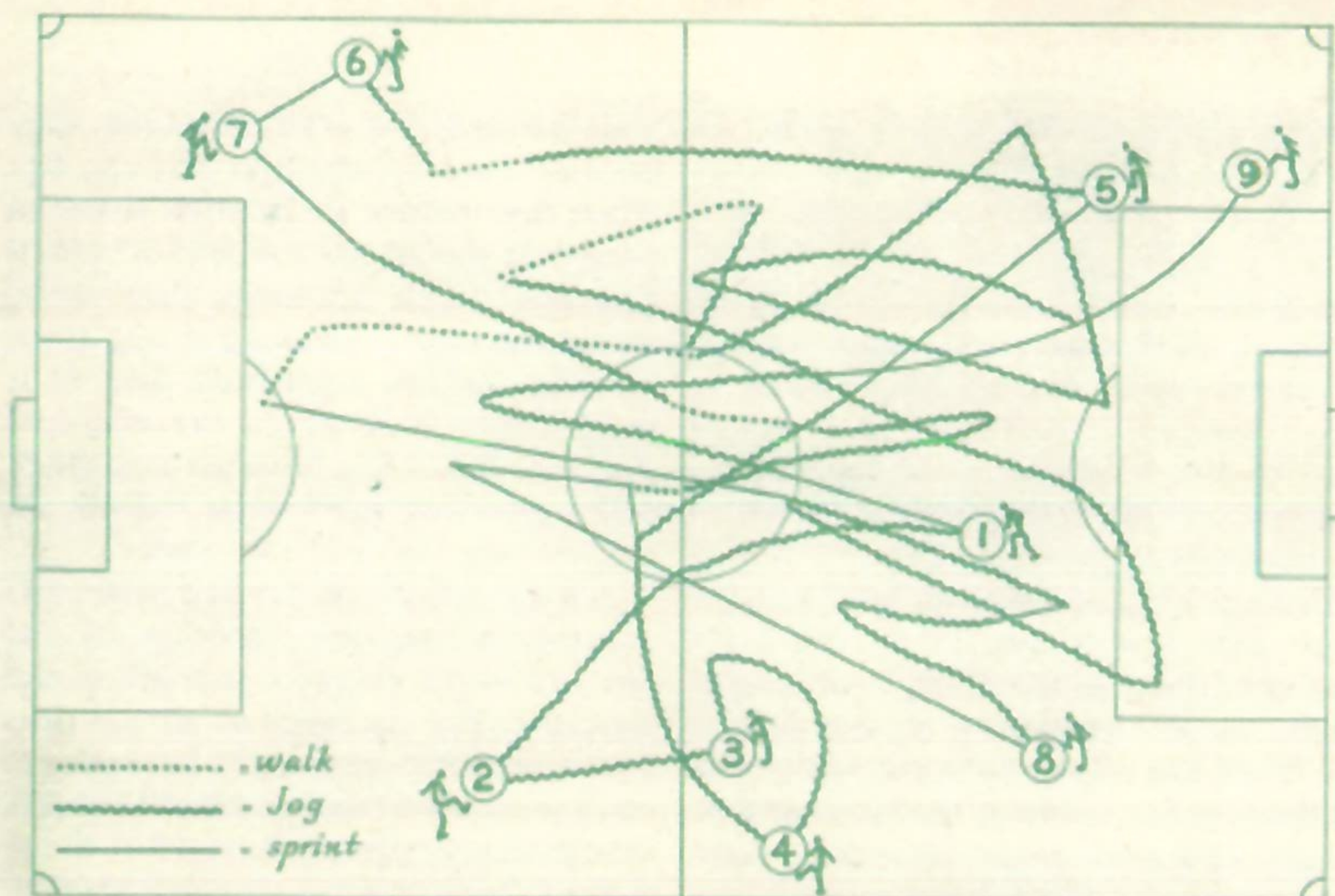


DIAGRAM 4



① - Contacts with ball

DIAGRAM 5

decide to bypass players and so give a more advantageous pass (diagram 2). A hallmark of the good player is decisiveness in selecting which is the better of the two possible passes. This, of course, comes with experience, though to achieve perfection in this I suspect you need an extra football instinct.

Once you have played the ball, if the forwards advance say 20 yards, then you should support them by advancing about the same distance, being ready for a ball to be sent back to you; by helping a forward you may be able to switch the point of attack. To stand still and admire your pass, even if it does turn out to be an unexpectedly good one, is not good practice! This used to be one of my weaknesses as a junior player, but Mr Dodgin who signed me on for Fulham soon put an end to that. The remedy? Every time you pass the ball forward, run immediately into another position. Practise this freely and soon it becomes part and parcel of your play.

There are times, of course, when you are able to run (without

the ball) through a gap into a position in advance of your own forwards. This move must be so timed that when the ball arrives

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you are actually running at speeds into a dangerous striking position. This can cause panic in the defenders and, while one

of them may manage to shut off your shot at goal, in doing so he frees one of your colleagues – to whom you can lay on a pass for him to shoot (diagram 3).

Very often the wing-half intercepts the ball and can run with it at speed in order to create and take advantage of a two-against-one situation. He should, if possible, run at a defender in order to compel him to make a tackle, thus freeing a colleague. This calls for tremendous stamina, for if the move breaks down, the half-back must go all out to recover his defensive position – and it's usually a mighty long way back!

Attacks by the wing-half with the ball should not be done repeatedly, otherwise your forwards will tend to feel that they have no room in which to play the ball when they receive it. In other words, a wing-half should not run into advanced positions which forwards, themselves, would run into. It can tend to stop them running, and we don't want that! It is much better, generally, if the wing-half plays the ball





to the forwards and, while still supporting them from behind, let the forwards do their own work.

A wing-half should develop power and accuracy in long range shooting for this can add to the offensive strength of the forwards. For example, in all the time I have played at wing-half, I have not yet had the chance to score from close range, though many openings have fallen to my style of play in the areas approaching the penalty box (diagram 4).

Just such a chance came to me when I was playing for West Bromwich Albion against West Ham United in 1960/61. Midway through the second half with the

score still 0-0, the Albion forced a left-wing corner. I had taken up a normal wing-half position for a corner – roughly 25 yards from goal – and the ball was cleared by a West Ham defender straight to me. On gaining control of it, I found I was faced with a very crowded goalmouth with every one of my forwards heavily marked. My mind was quickly made up for me, I put all the power I had into a drive at goal. My aim was good and with the poor West Ham goalkeeper hampered by many players in front of him, the ball finished happily and snugly in the corner of the net. It was the only goal of the game.

In the 4-2-4 system one wing-half helps the defence more or less continuously whereas the other joins an inside-forward to connect the four defenders with the four attackers. The set-up varies a great deal but as the attacking wing-half, I have much more opportunity to run into attacking positions wherever the ball may be. This suits me down to the ground for in the first part of my career I was an inside-forward and, naturally, I have attacking inclinations. I am always on the look-out for, and ready to make, attacking runs and to interchange with a forward in order to bring confusion to the opposing defence. To be an attacking wing-half involves a lot of running around (diagram 5). You are not only looking for the ball but also trying to reach positions to help your team-mates. The ball may not always be passed to you, but your movements will help them to make their own play more successful.

So don't be disheartened when the ball does not come your way. Your run will, undoubtedly, have made a space for one of your team-mates. This is what I call "unselfish running". It plays a vital part in the tactics of any modern, successful football team. You will find you do receive the ball quite often. Over a number of matches the number of passes evens itself out and the method is part of a very satisfactory way of playing. But never forget that when your run breaks down your job is to get back and help the defence.

Last season against Spain and Wales at Wembley the grounds was wet and very heavy. And my legs and feet felt like lead especially in the late stages. I know, however, that if I am to adopt this attacking role, I must be prepared to extend myself to the point of exhaustion. But there are rewards and compensations. I doubt if anyone after these matches was more tired and deadbeat than I was, yet no one could have felt more exhilarated. The sense of exhausted, proud, sweaty exhilaration you experience in the dressing room at the end of a tough match is one of the nicest sensations football has to offer.

TONY BROWN



aving missed the last couple of games with injury, I'm back in situ this afternoon – I'm not saying

I've passed the fitness test, but I'm here anyway!

I watched the Liverpool game on TV and then saw the extended Arsenal highlights as well, but television doesn't really give you the true picture of a game. That's the excuse I'm going to use anyway, because I don't like talking about games where we've got beat and I can't usually avoid it – this is one of the only benefits for the injured commentator!

Two defeats against teams of that quality is hardly a disaster though and although from what I saw we weren't exactly at our best, I don't think you want to get too bogged down in losing those two games. The thing to look at is that we took six points from 12 in the last spell of games and in the wider context, better to beat Villa and Wolves who will be in and around us in the table all season rather than Liverpool and Arsenal who will be over the hills and far away. Not only was it great to win the derby games, you get more value for your points by beating closer rivals in the table as well, because you're taking points off them.

Even so, nobody likes losing games and you don't want that

run to go on for too long, so that makes this afternoon especially important for the team, and all the more so given the visitors are Bolton who are below us in the league table at the moment. They had a great win before the break, putting five past Stoke and they'll be looking to build on that today. They've been very inconsistent this season, either winning well or getting hammered a few times, so from our point of view, we hope it's the second Bolton that turns up.

But you can't take anything for granted and with Spurs coming up next weekend, Albion will really need to be on their game this afternoon. With 11 points from 11 games, they can be happy enough with their start, especially when you look at what the fixture list has chucked at us, but what you want to avoid is getting sucked into the bottom three because it can be so hard to get yourselves free. We managed to keep above the real pressure cooker all last season and that was vital, and it's something we want to emulate this year, so three points today would keep us pushing in the right direction.

Given I haven't been at the games the last few weeks, I thought I'd better talk about something else today! The series in the programme about all the club's managers has been an interesting one to

read over the last few weeks, so I thought I'd look at the managers that I worked under during my time as a player here. There was a few of them!

The one thing you can say about management is that – unless you happen to be Fergie or Wenger – you'll always get it in the neck in the end! However you play, whatever way you set up your team, eventually managers and coaches almost always get the sack unless they get out first!

Just over the last few years alone, we've had chalk and cheese here with the approaches of Gary Megson and Tony Mowbray. I'm loath to criticise either of them because they both did some fantastic things for his football club. Gary twice got us into the Premier League at a time in our history when most of us never imagined that would be possible, Tony took us to Wembley twice, won the Championship and had the team playing some superb stuff at times. But ultimately, football management is only ever about results, nothing else.

And they not only have to get results, they have to stay ahead of the supporters. I've said it before in this column, I always go back to Alan Curbishley at Charlton when we used to go down there five or six years ago. I remember coming away from the Valley once after all the fans there had been

moaning about him all afternoon – and they were 12th in the league. But the supporters were full of, “We should be in Europe! He’s taken us as far as he can!” No, Charlton had gone as far as they could and he was working like mad to make sure they didn’t go backwards! So even successful managers sometimes struggle to keep people onside. And what would Charlton give for being in the Premiership now?

It’s a tough life being a manager, but the way in which things have changed in terms of the profile and the pressure around the game, it’s only got worse. I think it was a slightly calmer situation when I first joined the club. My first manager at the Albion was Gordon Clark, he was the one who signed me, but in football terms, I didn’t really have much to do with him because I was only a kid then, only 15, I signed a three year apprenticeship but was obviously nowhere near the first team.

He didn’t stay that long afterwards and then Archie Macaulay took over and again, I was still a youngster so the only things you really got to know about the managers was what you overheard the first team players say about them! They called Archie the “Scarlet Pimpernel” because you could never find him! He had a good reputation when he came as an up and coming manager, he’d been at Norwich when they had a great giant killing run in the FA Cup, but he never really got things going here even though we had a lot of good players at the time – Bobby Robson, Derek Kevan, Don Howe, Alec Jackson, there was Bobby Hope and Chippy Clark establishing themselves as well. But Archie wasn’t a very forceful personality, and I think you saw that on that film, “The Saturday Men”, the documentary that was made about the club.

I remember that I was coming towards the end of my apprenticeship and I wanted to know if I was going to be signed on or not, so I kept knocking on his door, asking him what he was going to do about it, and he kept fobbing me off, saying they hadn’t made their minds up. I can’t remember how many times we



did that but in the finish, he got the sack just before the end of the season, so it wasn’t his decision anyway!

Jimmy Hagan replaced him and that was probably the best thing that could have happened to me. For whatever reason, he

saw something in me and signed me on professional forms right away and within no time, he gave me my debut as well. I’ve always been grateful to him for that and even now, I still believe that if Archie had stayed as manager, I don’t think for a minute that I’d have been signed on as a professional.

Jim has a pretty mixed reputation among the players who were there at the time, but to a man, they’ll tell you that his ability to spot talent was absolutely second to none. When you go down the list of players he brought in, it’s incredible – John Osborne, Doug Fraser, John Kaye, John Talbut, Jeff Astle, he brought Graham Lovett into the team, me and Ian Collard as well, so that was the core of the cup winning team of the 1960s, and players who were the backbone of the team for many a year. From a manager’s perspective, that’s some pedigree to have. He was brave as well, never worried about

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giving young players a go, he had the philosophy that if you were good enough, you were old enough.

If that had been the whole story of Jimmy Hagan, he'd have been a legend I suppose but he had the other side to him where his man management skills left a bit to be desired shall we say! He was the parade ground kind of manager, he had to control everything, very strict in all that he did. He trained you very hard and the majority of the time, it was all about running. He was a real taskmaster, you did lots of running, track work, cross country, road work and it did make us fit, you can't argue with that.

You very rarely saw a ball with Jim, the only time you saw it was if he set up a practice match. He was from the school that used to say if you didn't see the ball in the week, you'd be hungry for it on Saturday! I remember Danny Blanchflower's answer was, "If I don't see it all week, how am I going to recognise it on Saturday?" It was a very odd idea but that was the way things were at lots of clubs then. It makes you wonder how we ever fitted together as a team, but I suppose that came from his ability to spot players and then slot them together. He found quality

players who he believed would do the right thing come Saturday evening. We'd maybe have a couple of practice matches a week as well and to be honest, that was for his benefit so that he could play! He'd start as ref but every game, he'd call somebody off and replace them, and to be fair, he was usually the best player, even at his age! He must have been a fantastic footballer in his prime, because his passing, his touch, it was tremendous.

He was the kind of manager that ruled by fear, we were frightened to death of him. If we were lapping the track in training and you saw his car pull into the training ground, the word would go round and you'd pick up the pace! He was a stickler for standards, everything had to be done right, so if you cut a corner of the track off, you soon knew about it! He'd have you back doing extra and it was that disciplinarian side of it that just wore some of the players down. It was probably a bit different for me compared with some of the senior lads because I was a kid, coming through, he'd given me my chance and I just did what I was told! But the players who'd been around a while, the likes of

Stan Jones, Graham Williams, Don Howe, it was all a bit much to be treated like that, like kids at times.

The daft thing was that away from the training ground or from games, he was completely different. In those days, players and the manager would go to the supporters clubs and enjoy an evening with them, playing cards, darts and dominoes and Jim would be brilliant, the life and soul of the party, laughing and joking, telling stories. And many years later, there was a knock at the door and there was Jimmy, come round to see me. I think he'd been managing abroad but he was back in the area and he came round for a chat and we were talking for ages. And that's the side of him that people don't talk about.

It is a pity really because Jim is remembered for the tracksuit revolt, reversing his car into the canal at Spring Road – or being pushed in by the players according to the myth! – losing the League Cup Final to QPR at Wembley and being a real so and so! But in fact, he made a really big contribution to this club and history hasn't been that kind to him unfortunately. He deserves





better as far as I'm concerned, though some of the lads will say different I'm sure. He built a new team, won the League Cup, laid the foundations for the FA Cup win, bought Jeff Astle, those are massive achievements that will always live on at this club.

Winning that League Cup was a very big thing because we hadn't won anything for 12 years. Doesn't sound much now I know but in those days, it seemed like a lifetime and people were getting impatient. To be pitted against West Ham, against Moore, Peters, Hurst, just a few months before they went and won the World Cup, that was a hell of a challenge. Jim was all for attacking football, entertaining, getting on the front foot, and to

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this day, I still say the second leg when we just tore them apart and won 4-1 to win the final 5-3 on aggregate, was the best game I ever played in and probably the best I've seen Albion involved in in over 50 years here. And Jimmy should get a lot of credit for that because it was his team and his philosophy that did it. We annihilated West Ham with open football, they couldn't live with us and the game was done in half an hour.

Then a year later at Wembley, 2-0 up at half-time against QPR from the Third Division, and we lost 3-2, and with all that had gone on before being held against him, that did for him. Like I said, in the end, it's all about results!

GRAVEN IMAGES

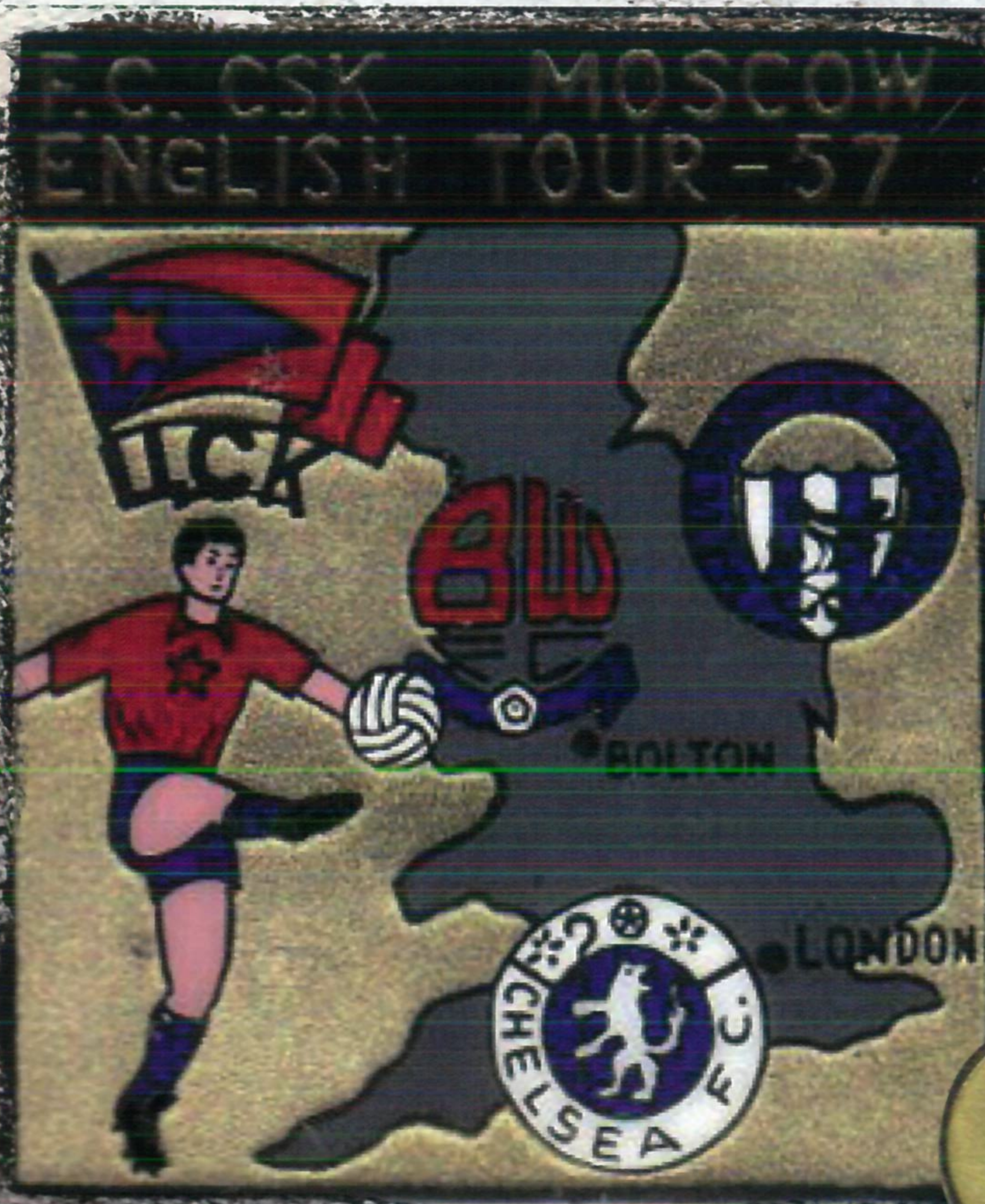


Regular readers will recall that for the destruction of the Wolves, this page was graced by Eric Clapton. Continuing that theme, here is my badge...

The Throstles have always been footballing pioneers, as we were in the summer of 1957 when we became the first English club to win a game in the Soviet Union, beating Dynamo Tblisi and the Soviet Army outfit in

Moscow on a three match tour that also included a draw with FC Zenit.

Later that year, the Soviet Army enjoyed a brief trip to this country – tanks optional – where they played at The Hawthorns, losing 6-5. As the badge illustrates, they also visited Bolton Wanderers and Chelsea during their jaunt in a rare moment of rapprochement amid the Cold War – exactly twelve months earlier, the Soviet Army had been on tour in Hungary for altogether different reasons.

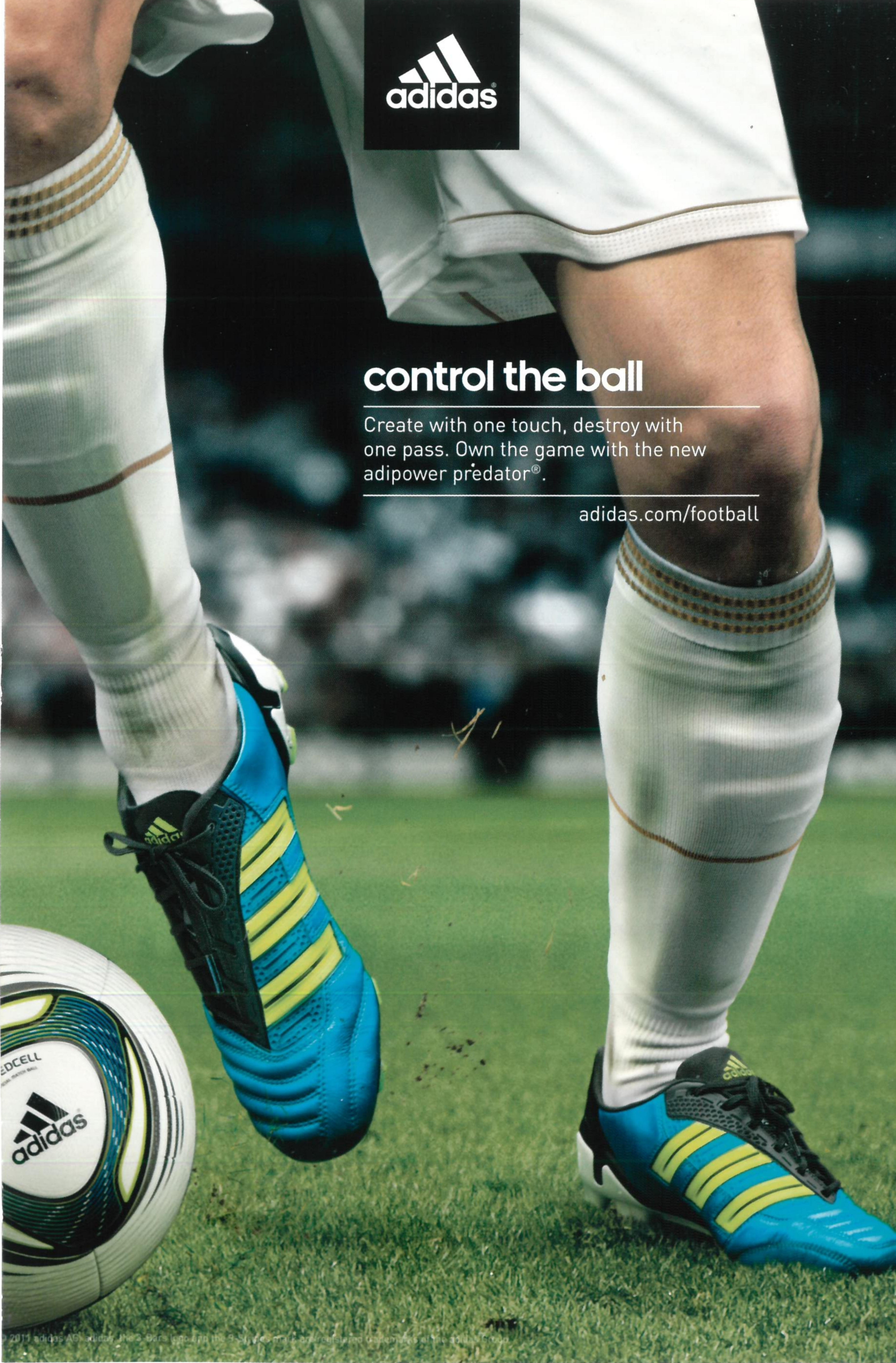




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THE TEAMS

WEST BROMWICH ALBION

BOLTON WANDERERS

BEN FOSTER	1	◆	1	ADAM BOGDAN
JOE MATTOCK	2	◆	2	GRETAR RAFN STEINSSON
JONAS OLSSON	3	◆	3	MARCOS ALONSO
SOMEN TCHOYI	5	◆	4	PAUL ROBINSON
JAMES MORRISON	7	◆	5	GARY CAHILL
SHANE LONG	9	◆	6	FABRICE MUAMBA
CHRIS BRUNT	11	◆	7	CHRIS EAGLES
STEVEN REID	12	◆	8	STUART HOLDEN
MARTON FULOP	13	◆	9	TUNCAY SANLI
JEROME THOMAS	14	◆	10	MARTIN PETROV
GRAHAM DORRANS	17	◆	11	RICARDO GARDNER
NICKY SHOREY	20	◆	12	ZAT KNIGHT
YOUSOUF MULUMBU	21	◆	14	KEVIN DAVIES
ZOLTAN GERA	22	◆	15	TYRONE MEARS
GARETH McAULEY	23	◆	16	MARK DAVIES
PETER ODEMWINGIE	24	◆	17	IVAN KLASNIC
CRAIG DAWSON	25	◆	18	SAM RICKETTS
JAMES HURST	26	◆	19	NIGEL REO-COKER
SAM MANTOM	27	◆	20	ROBBIE BLAKE
BILLY JONES	28	◆	21	DARREN PRATLEY
GEORGE THORNE	29	◆	22	JUSSI JAASKELAINEN
GABRIEL TAMAS	30	◆	23	SEAN DAVIS
SIMON COX	31	◆	24	DAVID NGOG
MARC-ANTOINE FORTUNE	32	◆	25	DEDRYCK BOYATA
PAUL SCHARNER	33	◆	26	ROB LAINTON
ROMAN BEDNAR	43	◆	27	CHUNG-YONG LEE
		◆	28	GAEL KAKUTA
		◆	31	DAVID WHEATER
		◆	37	JOSHUA VELA
		◆	39	JOE RILEY

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